

CENTRAL PROCUREMENT DIRECTORATE

CUSTOMER AND SUPPLIER CHARTER

Updated 25 September 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Customer and Suppliers' Charter is to give you information about what we do and the standards of service you should expect when you deal with us.

The Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) was established on 1 April 2002 as a result of the Review of Public Procurement, which reported in February 2002. Our job is to support the Northern Ireland Procurement Board in the development of policy, and to provide a professional advice and procurement service for Northern Ireland Departments, Agencies, NDPBs and the wider Public Sector.

This leaflet sets out our commitments to our customers and suppliers that we do business with, either now or in the future.

We want to continue to improve our service for the benefit of both our customers and suppliers. We are interested in your opinions. We will listen and, where appropriate, act upon your suggestions/comments about the services we provide. If you have any comments you should contact us at the address given at the end of this Charter or through the feedback form on our website www.cpdni.gov.uk.

I hope you find the Charter helpful.

DES ARMSTRONG

Director

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

CPD is part of the Department of Finance and Personnel and plays a key role in delivering value, promoting sustainability and enabling reform.

We support the Northern Ireland Procurement Board by developing and reviewing procurement policy, publicising the policies approved by the Board, and promoting best practice and value for money in procurement within the Northern Ireland Public Sector.

CPD also helps our customers to obtain the supplies, services and construction works that they need by providing expert advice and professional skills during the procurement lifecycle, from initial concept to completion and realisation of benefits. We work in partnership with suppliers, potential suppliers and industry representatives to help them meet the needs of the public sector market.

More details of the services we provide can be found on www.cpdni.gov.uk.

OUR VALUES

Everyone doing or wishing to do business with Central Procurement Directorate can expect us to embody the values set out below:-

- focusing on customers;
- respect for people;
- open communication;
- working to deliver best value;
- the development of positive working relationships with suppliers and others;
- a commitment to the highest ethical standards of public service;
- valuing and harnessing the diversity of staff; and
- professional services and advice, provided by staff expert in their professional discipline who are encouraged to be a member of a relevant professional body.

WHO DOES THE CHARTER APPLY TO?

The principles and service standards set out in this Charter will underpin our dealings with those with both our customers and suppliers, as further clarified below:-

Customers

CPD's customer base is the Northern Ireland Public Sector, which includes Government Departments, their agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies. The standard of service expected and agreed by these bodies is set in Service Level Agreements, which are negotiated and agreed annually between the Directorate and each of its customers.

Suppliers

CPD does business with many companies and individuals who are either suppliers or others coming to us for help and advice in the hope of doing business with us. These relationships are important as they are critical to ensuring that we deliver a quality procurement and advisory service to the Public Sector.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

The administration of public procurement is governed by the following principles:-

1. Transparency – we will ensure that as far as possible there is openness and clarity in policy and its delivery.
2. Competitive Supply – we will procure through competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary.
3. Consistency – suppliers can expect that our procurement policy will be consistent with other Centres of Procurement Expertise.
4. Effectiveness – we will meet the commercial, regulatory and socio-economic goals of government in a balanced matter appropriate to the procurement requirement.
5. Efficiency – we will carry out all procurement processes as cost effectively as possible.
6. Fair Dealing – we will treat suppliers fairly including protecting commercial confidentiality where appropriate. We will not impose unnecessary burdens or constraints on suppliers or potential suppliers.
7. Integrity – we will ensure that there is no corruption or collusion with suppliers and others.
8. Informed Decision Making – we will base decisions on accurate information and monitor requirements to ensure that they are met.
9. Legality – we will conform to EU and other legal requirements.
10. Integration – our policies will pay due regard to Government's other environmental, economic and social policies rather than cut across them.

11. Responsiveness – we will endeavour to meet the aspirations, expectations and needs of the community served by the procurement.
12. Accountability – we will ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to enable Accounting Officers to discharge their responsibilities on issues of procurement risk and expenditure.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Central Procurement Directorate is committed to providing a high standard of service to both our customers and suppliers. This means our staff will:-

- be polite and helpful at all times;
- give you their name;
- treat all information given to us in confidence as far as we can in accordance with the law and the principles of transparency and openness in public procurement; and
- treat you fairly.

When we make an appointment to see you

When we make an appointment to meet you we will aim to do the following:-

- Arrive promptly or, if you are calling to see us, see you at the appointed time. On occasions when we are delayed, due to circumstances beyond our control, we will make every effort to advise you of this and agree a new time.

When you write to us or e-mail us

You can write to us or e-mail us at the contact addresses overleaf.

When you write to us or e-mail us we will aim to do the following:-

- Acknowledge all formal correspondence upon receipt and follow-up with a full reply within 10 working days. If we cannot give you a full reply within this timescale we will write to you and advise when you can expect to receive a response; and
- Make sure all our correspondence is clear and presentable.

When you contact us by telephone

If you do not have the direct line number of the member of staff you want to contact, our general enquiries number is 028 9081 6423.

You may phone us between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday. When you phone us we will aim to ensure your call is answered promptly. If the person you wish to speak to is not available, you may leave a message or we will try to get someone else who can help you. If we cannot help you immediately we will call you back before the end of the next working day.

Accessibility

Information about our services is available on our website on www.cpdni.gov.uk.

We will take steps to ensure that our services and buildings are accessible to all our customers and suppliers and we will do our best to cater for those with special needs or whose first language is not English.

CONSULTING YOU

The Procurement Board has set the Directorate a target of 90% satisfaction from customers and suppliers in the way business is conducted.

In our effort to achieve this target and improve our service we believe it is essential to consult the people who use our services. In light of this we may do the following:-

- conduct an annual supplier satisfaction survey;
- consult our customer Departments regularly under the terms of our Service Level Agreements; and
- invite customers to complete customer satisfaction questionnaires on completion of specific services.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If things go wrong

We aim to provide a high quality, efficient and professional service, but occasionally things can go wrong and we are keen to learn from our mistakes. If you are not happy with our service to you, please get in touch as soon as possible with the person you have been dealing with. They are best placed to sort out most problems. If you are still not satisfied, or feel unable to raise the matter with that person, please ask to speak to their immediate manager. We hope we will be able to deal with most problems in this way.

Formal Complaints

If this does not resolve the problem, CPD has a formal complaints procedure.

At this stage, your complaint and our response must be in writing or e-mail. We do not normally deal with this type of complaint verbally, as it is best to keep a written record.

You should write by post or e-mail to our Business Planning and Co-ordination Branch at the address overleaf. Your complaint will be referred to the Divisional Director, responsible for the area of work in which the complaint has arisen, who will arrange for it to be investigated. The Divisional Director will aim to send you a full response within 10 working days of receiving your complaint. If our investigation is taking longer than this, then we will let you know when you can expect a full reply.

If you remain dissatisfied following the Divisional Director's response, you should write to the Director of Central Procurement Directorate at the address given overleaf (or by e-mail to businessplanningcpd@dfpni.gov.uk). The Director will arrange to have the matter investigated and will aim to send you a full response within 15 working days of receiving your complaint. If the investigation is taking longer than this, then we will keep you informed of progress and let you know when you can expect a full reply.

It is important to note that this procedure is not an appeal mechanism for tenderers who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a procurement competition. The relevant procedure in such cases is set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No 5).

However it may be helpful to explain, in general terms, the process used to decide qualitative scores and CPD's approach when a tenderer disagrees with those scores.

When a tender competition has a qualitative element to the award criteria - and almost all of them do - we establish a panel with knowledge or experience of the particular procurement requirement to make a qualitative judgement of the various tenders. The role of the panel members is to scrutinise the tender submissions and to use their judgement to make an informed, collective decision on the score to be awarded against the various pre-determined criteria.

If a tenderer disagrees with the score allocated and makes a formal complaint, it is not possible for the Director or Divisional Director dealing with the complaint to amend the score, as that person did not participate in the collective debate which resulted in the allocation of the score. In dealing with disputes about scores it is our practice to review the process undertaken, but not to reopen the scores decided collectively by the panel, unless there appears to be a manifest irrationality.

Alongside each score, the panel is asked to provide a comment which is useful in providing tenderers with feedback which could assist them in future competitions. However, it is important to note that it is the scores, and not the comments, that represent the panel's collective decision for the purpose of assessing the tender. In the event of any apparent inconsistency between scores and comments, the score shall prevail.

If you remain dissatisfied, having heard from our Director, you may ask a Member of the Assembly (MLA) to refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman for investigation. **You will be expected to have referred your complaint to us before requesting your representative to take the matter up with the Ombudsman.**

CONTACT DETAILS

You may contact Central procurement Directorate at;

Central Procurement Directorate

Clare House

303 Airport Road West

BELFAST

BT3 9ED

For general enquiries: 028 9081 6423

To discuss the complaints procedure: 028 9081 6236

E-mail: procure.info@dfpni.gov.uk

Web site: www.cpdni.gov.uk

Formal complaints E-mail: businessplanningcpd@dfpni.gov.uk

You may contact the Ombudsman at:-

The Ombudsman

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

BELFAST

BT1 6BR

Tel: 028 9023 3821 or Freephone: 0800 343424

e-mail: ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk

You may also write to The Ombudsman at: -

The Ombudsman

FREEPOST BEL 1478

Belfast

BT1 6BR