



Care Inspectorate

Procurement Strategy April 2026 – March 2031

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Care Inspectorate Procurement Strategy April 2026 – March 2031

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Finance and Procurement Manager

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Care Inspectorate's Procurement Strategy for the period April 2026–March 2031 has been informed by the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015, the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Procurement (Scotland) Regulations 2016. The Strategy is designed to take a responsible and sustainable approach to procurement.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how the Care Inspectorate will plan and manage its procurement activities to meet their corporate aims and objectives, while ensuring compliance with all regulatory and legislative requirements.

Procurement delivers fair, transparent and effective processes that achieve best value, are legally compliant and follow best practice. This is particularly important in the current challenging financial climate, where procurement can help generate savings and efficiencies that can be reinvested to support wider corporate objectives.

Procurement is a devolved responsibility within the Care Inspectorate. Staff must have the appropriate skills and authority to procure goods, services or works, and all procurement activity must be carried out in line with agreed policies and procedures.

This document sets out the Care Inspectorate's Procurement Strategy for the five year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031 and is supported by an annual procurement action plan.

1.1 Our Corporate Plan 2026- 2031

Our corporate plan sets out our vision, our mission, our values and our strategic outcomes. This procurement strategy has been developed to support the delivery of our Corporate Plan and the achievement of our vision.

1.1.1 Our vision

The Care Inspectorate's vision is that everyone in Scotland experiences high-quality, compassionate care, support and learning when they need it, which upholds their rights and choices.

1.1.2 Our mission

To achieve our vision and provide public assurance about the quality of social care services and social work, we will:

- ensure those who experience care and support - and their communities - are at the heart of all that we do
- register, inspect and resolve complaints about social care services
- work to ensure experiences and outcomes promote and uphold individual rights
- support services to continuously improve through effective self-evaluation and quality improvement
- actively share learning and good practice from and to the sector
- take action where we see people are not being cared for safely and their outcomes are not being met

- keep the public informed and assured about the quality of social care across Scotland.

1.1.3 Our values

- **Person-centred:**
we will put people, compassion and kindness at the heart of everything we do.
Impact:
we focus on making a positive impact for everyone experiencing care in Scotland whilst ensuring our work delivers the best value to the public.
- **Respect:**
we value everyone's dignity and are respectful in everything we do.
- **Equity:**
we embrace diversity and nurture an inclusive environment where everyone is supported to achieve equal outcomes.
- **Integrity:**
we act impartially, fairly and consistently, upholding transparency and accountability in all our actions.

1.1.4 Our strategic outcomes to achieve our vision

- assure and improve
- involve and inform
- uphold and champion people's rights

1.1.5 We will maximise our impact through:

- Our workforce and volunteers
- Digital and data

2.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

Care Inspectorate Board	Approval of and overseeing the delivery of the Procurement Strategy.
Care Inspectorate Finance and Resources Committee	Recommends approval of the strategy to the Care Inspectorate Board. Considers in detail the annual procurement performance report.
Chief Executive	Accountable Officer. Specific responsibility to ensure that procurement activity is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Procurement section of the Scottish Public Finance Manual. This responsibility will be discharged through the implementation of this strategy.
The Executive Director of Corporate Services	Sponsor of the Procurement Strategy
Finance & Corporate Governance	Head of Finance and Corporate Governance: Provides advice, challenge, and assurance on procurement matters as required, particularly in relation to financial control and corporate governance. Finance and Procurement Manager: Provides strategic and operational leadership for all procurement activity, including complex, high-risk, and contentious matters, and is responsible for the development and delivery of the Procurement Strategy in compliance with Public Sector Procurement Regulations.
Delegated Purchasers	Support delivery of the Procurement Strategy
Procurement Development Group	Supports continued development of procurement capability.

2.1 Influencing Factors

This procurement strategy is shaped by key external legislative, policy and governance requirements that guide responsible and compliant public procurement. It reflects the core Scottish procurement regulations, alongside national policy frameworks such as the Procurement Commercial Improvement Programme, the Scottish Public Finance Manual and relevant Scottish Procurement Policy Notes.

The strategy is also aligned to the Scottish Government's Public Procurement Strategy 2023–2028, which sets out a national vision for procurement to deliver value for money, drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth, support net zero ambitions, and promote wellbeing outcomes through the way public funds are spent.

In addition, it supports the objectives of Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, recognising procurement as a key lever for economic reform, innovation, fair work, and community wealth building.

It also incorporates obligations relating to transparency, data protection and equality, as well as statutory climate change duties that ensure sustainability is embedded in procurement decisions. Additionally, health and safety legislation underpins our commitment to safe and ethical contracting practices. Together, these factors provide the essential framework within which this strategy operates.

Embedding proportionate, risk-based supplier cyber assurance into procurement and contract management will help the Care Inspectorate reduce supply-chain risk to the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its information, systems and services. Our approach will prioritise suppliers and services presenting the highest risk, such as those with access to our systems or cloud environments, handling personal or sensitive data, supporting critical services, hosting/managing digital infrastructure, or relying on sub-contractors. We will apply appropriate requirements and assurance throughout the contract lifecycle, supported by standard processes and tools and aligned to public-sector good practice.

Internal factors also play a significant role in shaping this procurement strategy. It is informed by the priorities and commitments set out in the Care Inspectorate Corporate Plan, alongside the Procurement Policy which supports consistent and effective procurement practice. In addition, organisational policies including the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Corporate Health and Safety Policy ensure that our procurement activity reflects our values, promotes fairness and inclusion, and upholds high standards of safety and wellbeing across all contracted services.

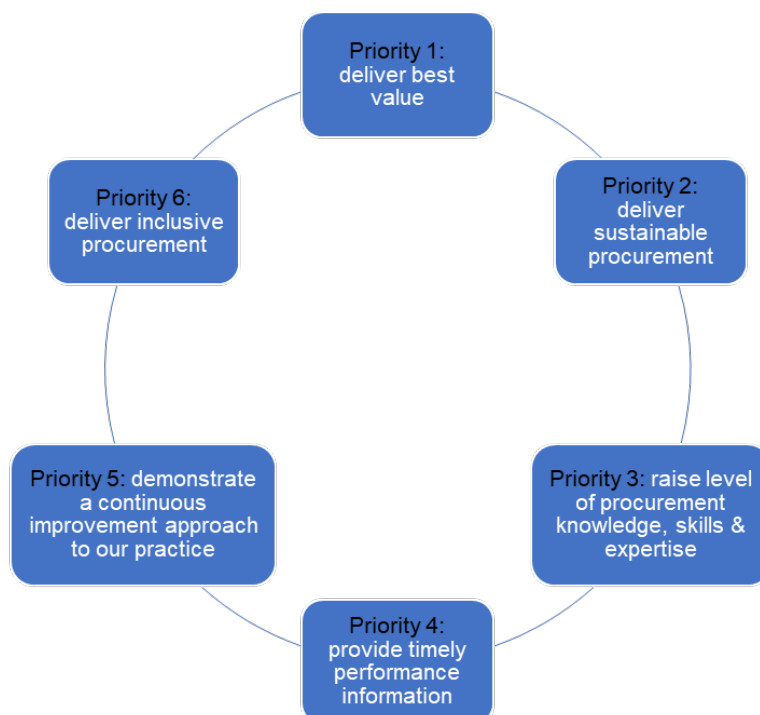
3.0 OUR PROCUREMENT PRIORITIES

This Procurement Strategy is underpinned by six priorities that together provide a clear framework for how the Care Inspectorate will plan, deliver and govern procurement activity during the period 2026–2031.

The priorities reflect our statutory obligations under public procurement legislation, national policy expectations and our wider corporate and strategic objectives. They set out the

intended focus of procurement activity over the planning period, establish the key principles that will shape how procurement is undertaken, and define how performance and progress will be monitored and evaluated.

Collectively, these priorities support the delivery of best value, transparency and compliance, while enabling procurement to make a positive contribution to sustainability, equality, continuous improvement and organisational capability.



3.1 Priority one: deliver best value

We will deliver best value when procuring goods, services and works. This is achieved through the optimum combination of whole life cost, quality (or fitness for purpose) and sustainability to meet organisational needs. Competition promotes efficiency and effectiveness in public expenditure, therefore, where possible, we advertise tender opportunities over £10,000, excluding VAT, on the Public Contracts Scotland advertising portal, unless there are justifiable reasons not to.

We will award contracts based on the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) which balances value for money, risk and the required quality of the service, goods or works. This will include proportionate cyber security and supply-chain assurance requirements.

We will continue to use collaborative frameworks where appropriate and explore opportunities for further collaboration through our partnership with Central Government Procurement Shared Services (CGPSS) and our multi-agency Cluster

Group. These arrangements facilitate the sharing of knowledge and encourage partnership working to ensure we deliver value for money and pool resources and expertise.

Procurement activity contributes to the overall efficiency targets for the Care Inspectorate, with benefits realised reported in the annual Procurement Performance Report.

3.2 Priority two: deliver sustainable procurement

Sustainable procurement is defined as "*a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment*" (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2006). For the Care Inspectorate, this means we will routinely consider the environmental, social and economic opportunities and impacts associated with our purchasing decisions.

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory sustainable procurement duty on the Care Inspectorate, with a focus on securing economic, social and environmental benefits. This duty is further supported by national policy direction which emphasises the role of public procurement in advancing Scotland's response to the global climate emergency and contributing to the transition to a net-zero economy. While reducing inequality is an important aspect of sustainable procurement, statutory equality and human rights obligations are addressed in detail under Priority Six: Inclusive Procurement.

We will take account of climate and circular economy considerations, in line with relevant Scottish Procurement Policy Notes.

We will continue to explore opportunities to secure sustainability benefits through our procurement activity. Appropriate sustainability assessment tools will be applied in line with national policy and guidance, and opportunities will be incorporated where relevant and proportionate to the procurement.

3.2.1 Prompt payment to suppliers and their sub-contractors

We are committed to paying our suppliers promptly and reflect this in our standard terms and conditions. To ensure this flows through the supply chain, our terms also require suppliers with sub-contracting arrangements to make payment to their sub-contractors within the same terms. This requirement extends to all sub-contractors in the supply chain.

Proportionate assurance of compliance will be sought where relevant.

3.2.2 Addressing Fair Work Practices

We consider Fair Work First for all procurement opportunities of £10,000 or greater. This practice asks businesses bidding for our contracts to commit to adopting:

- 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
- payment of at least the Real Living Wage
- flexible and family-friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment
- opposing the use of fire and rehire practice

In accordance with the Statutory Guidance for Addressing Fair Work First in procurement, we will continue to incorporate evaluation of workforce matters into tenders for regulated procurements where the use of labour is a key deliverable, and for lower value tenders where it is proportionate to do so.

Where suppliers have staff working on our premises, these employees must be paid the Real Living Wage.

3.2.3 Community benefits

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 includes a sustainable procurement duty on public sector bodies requiring them to conduct their procurement in a way that will secure economic, social and environmental wellbeing, and a requirement that public bodies consider the use of community benefits in major contracts.

We will promote the use of community benefits within procurement exercises where relevant and proportionate to the contract.

3.2.4 SMEs, minority owned businesses and the third sector

This priority focuses on meeting statutory equality and human rights obligations through procurement and is distinct from sustainable procurement, as it addresses not only who can participate in procurement processes but also how goods, works and services are designed, delivered and experienced by people with protected characteristics.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, equality considerations are embedded within tender processes, and, where relevant and proportionate, suppliers are required to provide evidence of the equality policies and systems they have in place.

Our inclusive approach will increase supplier diversity by:

- eliminating unnecessary barriers in the procurement process to provide fair and equal access for SMEs, minority owned businesses and third sector organisations Third sector includes charities, community and voluntary groups, and social enterprises
- working proactively to encourage these organisations to participate in the procurement opportunities

- seeking feedback to ensure procurement processes are as accessible and inclusive as possible.

A 'supported business' is an economic operator whose main aim is the social and professional integration of disabled or disadvantaged people, where at least 30% of its workforce are disabled or disadvantaged.

We will consider using the Scottish Government's Requirements Reserved for Supported Businesses Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) when procuring goods and services that fall within these categories.

3.2.5 Fair & ethical trading

We support the sourcing of goods and services that are fairly and ethically traded. Where it is directly relevant, we will use appropriate standards and labels in our procurement to take account of fair and ethical trading considerations as well as consider equivalent offerings from suppliers who demonstrate they can meet the specified criteria without necessarily having the specific certification.

We use the Single Procurement Document as standard for regulated procurements which allows consideration of whether a potential supplier has been convicted of certain offences and/or committed any acts of professional misconduct and allows suitability to be assessed.

We will apply proportionate due diligence and take account of relevant sanctions, human rights risks and guidance to ensure our procurement does not support suppliers linked to conflict situations or sanctioned regimes, in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.

We will also ask contractors to take corrective action where concerns over labour standards in the supply chain are identified.

3.2.6 Climate change

We will use the sustainability tools to identify opportunities to contribute to an overall reduction in our carbon emissions. We will continue to provide climate literacy e-learning training for all staff who have delegated procurement responsibility and work collaboratively to identify further opportunities to support the delivery of our net zero plans.

3.2.7 Provision of food

We currently have no requirement to purchase food through a regulated procurement process. This means the general requirements of how we intend to improve health, wellbeing and education of communities and promote the highest standards of animal welfare are not applicable to our regulated procurement activity.

We will continue to review this position should our requirements change.

3.3 Priority three: raise procurement knowledge, skills and expertise

We will build an appropriate level of procurement capability across the organisation, proportionate to roles and responsibilities.

Procurement will be included in the induction programme for new staff, supported by a Procurement Policy Manual that sets out our procurement rules, governance framework, roles and responsibilities, and compliance requirements.

We will deliver appropriate training for staff with specific procurement responsibilities, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills required to undertake their roles effectively.

All staff responsible for managing contracts will be required to complete contract and supplier management e-learning modules. This will be supported by a Contract Management Handbook to enable consistent and effective management of contracts and suppliers across all levels of spend, with ongoing guidance, assurance and support from the Procurement Team.

The Procurement Competency Framework will inform the ongoing learning and development of the Procurement Team.

For staff outwith the Procurement Team, procurement related training needs will be identified and recorded through individual training and development plans as part of the learning and development process. The Procurement Team will maintain a central register of all procurement training undertaken to support oversight and assurance to continuous improvement.

We have in place a Counter Fraud and Corruption Framework which outlines where fraud and corruption may occur, who is responsible for reporting fraudulent activity and who to report it to. Appropriate preventative and detective controls, such as 'separation of duties' and robust systems of control, have been put in place to minimise the risk of fraud.

We continue to participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), which is an exercise that matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. All staff with delegated authority or a role in Procurement will receive Counter Fraud training.

We also have comprehensive whistleblowing guidance that supports employees to raise concerns about possible improprieties, including procurement related matters at the earliest opportunity and in an appropriate way.

Our Procurement Development Group meets at least twice annually to support procurement capability, knowledge sharing and continuous improvement across the organisation.

3.4 Priority four: provide timely performance information

Annual procurement performance reports will be shared with the Procurement Development Group for information and reported formally to the Care Inspectorate's Strategic Management Group, Finance and Resources Committee and Board.

These reports provide progress reports on the implementation of this strategy and include analysis of expenditure, supplier activity and procurement benefits and savings. We will use the performance information to support continuous improvement.

3.5 Priority five: demonstrate a continuous improvement approach

We will continue to strengthen our procurement practice through internal and external scrutiny. The Care Inspectorate participates in the Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP). The last assessment was in 2024, where the assessment scored green for all assessed areas.

We review our procurement spend monthly and address any non-compliance directly with relevant staff. We will continue to review our business processes annually to make sure they are customer focussed, have appropriate internal controls and separation of duties.

We will continue to work closely with procurement users to understand their needs, identifying improvement opportunities. Savings and benefits delivered through procurement will be reported in the annual procurement report.

3.6 Priority six: deliver inclusive procurement

We will continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion throughout all stages of our procurement activity. Our approach reflects the duties placed on the Care Inspectorate under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), we will ensure the procurement practice gives due regard to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act
- b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

To support this, we will:

- Make sure our contracts are designed in a way that is non-discriminatory, promotes fairness and supports equality of opportunity for our workforce and suppliers, and the people who use care services..
- Make sure that goods, works, and services provided by contractors meets the diverse needs of all users, taking account of accessibility, inclusion and the elimination of unintended barriers.
- Continue to use the Single Procurement Document (SPD) to assess suppliers' compliance with equality legislation and consider any history of professional misconduct or relevant convictions.

- Maintain a clause within our standard Terms and Conditions aligned to the Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010, ensuring suppliers do not engage in blacklisting activities and requiring corrective action where concerns arise.

By maintaining an inclusive approach, we will support supplier diversity, improve the accessibility of the goods, works and services we procure, and ensure our procurement practice reflect our wider organisational commitments to fairness, equality and human rights.

4.0 HEALTH & SAFETY

The Care Inspectorate is committed to making sure that health and safety considerations are embedded in our procurement activity. We have a Health and Safety Policy, associated procedures and guidance in place, and we expect our suppliers to demonstrate the same commitment to providing safe working environments and practices.

Where relevant and proportionate, we will request evidence from suppliers to confirm that they have appropriate health and safety management systems in place, including risk assessments, safe systems of work, and arrangements for incident reporting and investigation. These expectations apply to all contractors and subcontractors engaged through our procurement processes.

Our approach supports our statutory responsibilities and reflects our duty to provide safe environments for staff, suppliers, and the people who use our services.

5.0 DELIVERY OF STRATEGY

5.1 Communication

Our procurement activity is transparent, accessible and clearly communicated to stakeholders. We publish procurement information on our external website, including our Procurement Strategy, our Annual Procurement Reports, our two year forward plan, and supporting to guidance for suppliers.

We will communicate the approved strategy to all staff and make it publicly available via the Care Inspectorate website. In addition, all our contracts will continue to be published on the Public Contracts Scotland contract register, supporting transparency and supplier engagement.

5.2 Management and monitoring

The Procurement Team will lead on the implementation of this strategy, working with colleagues who have procurement responsibilities.

We will ensure that the priorities set out in the strategy are translated into clear activities through existing operational and financial planning processes, and we will

identify procurement projects that require additional support or specialist input from the Procurement Team.

We will review the strategy and our associated procurement action plan annually. This review will assess progress across our priorities and will identify procurement activity that requires additional support from the Procurement Team. The outcome of this will inform the development of a refreshed action plan and will feed into organisational planning for the following year.

Through regular monitoring, we will ensure that procurement activity remains compliant, proportionate and aligned with organisational objectives, supporting consistent and effective procurement practice.

5.3 Reporting

As soon as practicable after the end of the financial year, we will publish an annual procurement report which will include:

- A summary of regulated procurements completed during the year covered by the report.
- An assessment of whether these procurements complied with the strategy.
- Non-compliant regulated procurements and planned actions to address future compliance for regulated procurement.
- A summary of community benefits delivered through regulated procurement.
- An outline of steps taken to support the involvement of SMEs, supported businesses and the third sector organisations.
- A summary of regulated procurements expected to commence in the next two financial years.
- Any other information required by Scottish Ministers.

We will also provide an annual procurement performance report to the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board, reporting procurement performance and progress towards achieving the strategy's priorities. We will publish this report on the Care Inspectorate's website.

6.0 SUPPORTING POLICIES

Our procurement activity is supported by a range of organisational policies and procedures that make sure that all purchasing decisions are lawful, transparent and aligned with our statutory responsibilities and organisational values. These policies provide a framework within which procurement is planned, delivered and governed, and they support the delivery of the six procurement priorities set out in this strategy.

The key supporting policies are:

- procurement policy
- purchase to pay procedures
- business travel and subsistence
- hybrid (working) policy
- information security policy

- information governance policy
- learning and development policy
- prevention and detection of fraud and bribery
- whistleblowing
- carbon management and sustainability
- health and safety
- equality and diversity

In addition to the policies listed above, this strategy is supported by wider corporate governance, risk, workforce, digital and ethical frameworks that collectively ensure procurement activity is well-controlled, resilient, inclusive and aligned with organisational priorities.