

How to Do Business
With
Cheshire Constabulary

A guide for suppliers
January 2010



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to help suppliers and contractors interested in supplying goods, services, or works to Cheshire Constabulary understand how we do business. It does this by explaining what procurement means to us as a Police Authority, and by outlining our procurement process and a typical supplier application procedure.

The procurement of high quality goods and services is key to Cheshire Constabulary's delivery of public services. Our suppliers have a key role to play in this delivery and we therefore encourage competition, welcoming bids from both new and existing suppliers. A key criteria that we use to select a supplier is value for money, and, whilst we cannot discriminate in favour of locality, we are committed to supporting local firms to compete for contracts.

Cheshire Constabulary is located in the North West of England, between the metropolitan authorities of Merseyside and Greater Manchester. The geography of the area is largely rural, but it also contains a number of large towns, such as Chester, Warrington, and Crewe. The area is divided into three geographical police divisions.

Suppliers should note that Cheshire Constabulary collaborates with the North West Regional Police Procurement Group, in addition to procuring from National Police contracts, National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) contracts, Office of Government and Commerce (OGC) contracts and The Buying Solutions contracts.

1. PROCUREMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

As a local authority, we are bound by three main regulatory strands that govern how we procure goods and services. These are European law, national guidance, and our own local rules that are contained in Cheshire Police Authority's constitution.

1.1 EU Regulations

A treaty signed by member states of the European Union covers all public sector procurement contracts, regardless of their value. This treaty incorporates the free movement of goods and services and prevents discrimination against firms on the grounds of nationality.

The EU directives and regulations require us to follow detailed procedures, particularly with regard to the procurement of goods and services above certain financial thresholds. The thresholds are reviewed every two years and currently stand at £156,442 for goods and services, and £3,927,260 for works (excluding VAT) from 1 January 2010. So called 'Part B (residual) services have a threshold of £156,442.

1.2 **National Rules**

Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Police Authority adhere to UK competition law and all other rules and regulations relating to contracting.

1.3 **Local rules**

Cheshire Constabulary's procurement activities must also comply with Cheshire Police Authority's Financial Regulations, and its Procurement Strategy.

2. **HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES**

Cheshire Constabulary tender opportunities will be advertised on www.bluelight.gov.uk

You can view all opportunities without registering. Registration on www.bluelight.gov.uk is FREE, all you need is internet access, no special software or equipment is required. Once registered you will be able to view and express interest in tender opportunities from Cheshire Constabulary as well as those from other participating Authorities. You will also receive automatic email notifications from this site of any future opportunities advertised providing you complete the contract category interest section by ticking all relevant category boxes.

All contracts for goods and services with a value over the EU threshold (see below) are also advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). These can be viewed at <http://ted.europa.eu/>

3. **SUPPLYING TO CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY**

Unlike many public bodies, Cheshire Constabulary does not generally maintain standing or approved lists. Where a purchase need cannot be met from an existing contract or framework, a quotation or tender process is undertaken, as follows:

Estimated Value	Process
<£ 10,000	Informal Quotation – invite one or more persons/firms suitably qualified.
£10,000 - £50,000	Written Quotation – invite a minimum of three or more persons/firms suitably qualified.
>£ 50,000	Formal written tender (in accordance with CPA's Financial Regulations 7.16).
>£ 156,442 (goods and services) >£ 3,927,260 (works)	European Tender in accordance with EU procurement directives. (<i>Values current as at 1 January 2010 – fixed for 2 years</i>)

4. INFORMAL PROCESSES

Suppliers can be identified through internet searches, market knowledge, or prior use.

5.1 The Informal Quotation <£10,000

Although Financial Regulations state at least one supplier to quote, as best practice and to ensure best value we advise that a number of suppliers' are asked to quote. Whilst these can be verbal, we recommend a faxed or e-mailed quote be obtained to ensure that any pricing queries at invoice payment stage are easily resolved.

5.2 The Written Quotation >£10,000 and <£50,000

At least 3 suppliers' are requested to quote. Although an informal process, requests for quotations, as a minimum, must include a specification of the services/goods required and timescales for delivery where possible.

5. FORMAL PROCESSES

5.1 The Formal Tender >£50,000

Advertising new tenders

We must advertise tenders >£50,000 so if you are looking for current opportunities they will be advertised on www.bluelight.gov.uk We may also use local newspapers or specialist trade journals.

The Pre-Qualification Document (First Stage)

You will be asked in the advertisement to express your interest against the opportunity on www.bluelight.gov.uk This is an automated process within the Bluelight e-tendering system and you will be advised, by email, that your interest has been accepted and you have been invited to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire. You will need to login to your account on www.bluelight.gov.uk to retrieve the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire.

When completing a pre-qualification questionnaire you will need to provide details of your:

- Company information and history;
- Financial and insurance information;
- Technical resources and references;
- Previous experience you may have in providing the goods, services, or works for which you are tendering;
- Equal opportunities;
- Health and safety;
- Quality assurance, by stating accreditation to any recognised quality standards.

Financial Information – In this section, you are asked to provide financial information relating to your company. Please note that you will be asked to supply accounting information for the actual company applying to the Authority, and not just for the group or holding company of which your company may be part. Private limited companies and public limited companies must submit their audited accounts as registered with Companies House.

This information is used to assess the financial position of your company in relation to the size of the contract. We would also require information to check that you are registered, where appropriate, for tax.

Technical/Professional Ability – This section is designed to enable us to assess whether you have the relevant experience and technical ability to undertake the type of work for which you are applying. It is important to note that this is usually one of the most important aspects of the tender process.

Equal Opportunities – Cheshire Police Authority is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people, irrespective of sex, disability, marital status, creed, social class, colour race, ethnic origin, age or sexual orientation. It is important that people involved in supplying the Authority have an equal chance to work, contribute, and develop free from discrimination, prejudice or the fear of harassment. We are keen to ensure that our suppliers abide by equal opportunities law and are working to best practice in this area.

All suppliers, as part of the tender process, will be required to provide evidence that they have equal opportunities policies in place and are committed to them.

Diversity

Police forces in the North West Region are fully supportive of all aspects of diversity including ethnicity, race, religion, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. In this respect, police forces welcome expressions of interest from the ethnic minority, disabled and other diverse business communities and the voluntary sector. Contractors are therefore required to fully comply with all statutory obligations/applicable legislation and there will be a requirement to participate in the Authority's periodic supplier audits on all aspects of diversity.

Health and Safety – Successful contractors and suppliers are expected to demonstrate compliance with current health and safety legislation by having:

- A commitment to the health and safety of their employees, clients and others;
- Adequate risk assessment procedures where appropriate;
- An adequate system of monitoring and reporting incidents and ill health;
- Access to competent health and safety advice;
- Monitored contracts to ensure compliance with contract standards and health and safety requirements.

Insurance details – Depending on the nature of the contract or service being offered, we will ask to see a company's insurance cover for certain types of insurance:

- Employer's liability;
- Public liability;
- Professional indemnity cover;

Levels of cover will vary and each individual contract is judged on its own merits. Information concerning the required level of cover will usually be stipulated in the PQQ documentation.

Completing the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)

To ensure your bid is considered, you should:

- Provide all the information requested;
- Answer all questions accurately;
- Attach/enclose all relevant documents;
- Complete the authorisation section of the questionnaire;
- Upload and submit your completed Pre-Qualification Questionnaire within www.bluelight.gov.uk. Prior to the closing time/date specified.

Pre-Qualification Evaluation

The evaluation and scoring methodology used for your PQQ submission will be included in the document. The information provided will be used to assess your legal status, economic/financial standing and technical/professional ability/capability. Only those who meet the selection criteria are eligible to be taken through to the next stage and invited to tender.

Invitation to Tender (Second Stage)

At this stage, the following documents are issued to all suppliers who have been selected to be invited to tender. For tenders being conducted via www.bluelight.gov.uk suppliers will receive an automatic email notification to alert them to them having been invited to tender and they will need to login to their account to retrieve the tender documents.

The structure of the tender document may vary according to the particular contract, but will normally comprise the following:

Introduction – this provides background information regarding Cheshire Constabulary and the contract.

Instructions to Tenderer – this explains what we require you to submit, where to and by what date. It also outlines what to do if you require clarification. This is an important document and you are strongly advised to read and follow the instructions carefully.

Declaration and Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement. These documents require your [electronically] signed confirmation of the fact that no volumes or values are guaranteed, and that we are not bound to accept the lowest or any tender; the tender shall be open for acceptance for a set period etc and not to disclose information obtained during your performance of the contract.

Operational Requirements/Specification – This details what goods/services/works are required and how they are to be delivered.

Schedule of Prices – This is where the price element of the tender is recorded.

General Conditions of Contract – The Authority's terms and conditions for tender documents.

Special Conditions of Contract – This is an optional section, which is only included when there are specialist terms and conditions ie. OGC, JCT.

Force Contacts – This section includes contact names and addresses across all North West Forces, or any other forces who may collaborate with us and use the contract.

Tender Award Criteria – This identifies on what basis the contract will be awarded and will provide details of the evaluation and scoring methodology to be used..

Contract Management and Monitoring – This explains how the performance of the contract will be monitored, and includes the performance standards expected by Cheshire Constabulary.

Closing Date/Time and Submission

The closing time/date for receipt of tender submissions will be set commensurate with the complexity of the contract requirements and any minimum timescales (if applicable – over EU threshold only).

Electronic tendering via www.bluelight.gov.uk The Bluelight server will date and time mark all uploaded submissions therefore you are strongly recommended to commence your tender submission process within Bluelight at least **2 hours** prior to the closing date and time. You should bear in mind that depending on the file size of your documents for upload, they may take some time to transfer and upload. Responses received after this time/date may be disregarded.

For manual tenders, *'Subject to the Standing Orders of Cheshire Police Authority any tender received after this time and date will not be considered and **any indication on the envelope or parcel of the tender's identity will automatically invalidate the tender.** Postal franking machines should not be used therefore if they contain advertising materials.'*

Completing the Tender Documents

The tender documents will be issued electronically or by post and will contain details of tender requirements. All documents, particularly the specification, should be read carefully and all information completed fully and accurately. If you do not understand any part of the specification, you should contact the contact named in the tender and request further information. This must be done before the tender period closes.

Tender Evaluation and Contract Award

Returned tenders will be evaluated against the relevant criteria. This criteria will be made clear in the tender information pack or in the relevant European advert, wherever appropriate. The evaluation process will focus on examining how the tender will deliver the required service quality at the right cost. The balance between quality and price will vary depending on the particular service area and the contract being considered. References sites may be visited as necessary. Information provided at the PQQ stage e.g. economic/financial standing will be re-checked at this stage to ensure no details have changed which may affect their selection status.

Successful tenderers will usually be notified formally in writing; opportunities for unsuccessful companies to be debriefed are also provided.

Debriefing

We will endeavour, within the limits of commercial confidentiality, to offer feedback, when requested, to unsuccessful tenderers in order to explain why their bid has not been successful. This information can be used to help with any future bids a company may wish to make, as being unsuccessful in one contract does not mean that a company will be unsuccessful in the future, and we would welcome unsuccessful tenderers to compete in future competitions.

Contractor Vetting

If the nature of the contract requires your employees unescorted access to Cheshire Constabulary premises or access to sensitive material/systems; they will need to be vetted in accordance with our Non-Police Personnel vetting procedures.

We reserve the right to decline security clearance for any such member of staff. No member of staff will be allowed to visit the Authority's premises unaccompanied without security clearance. You must ensure that the list of security-cleared personnel is constantly kept up-to-date.

6. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

Cheshire Police Authority has obligations and responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to provide, on request, access to recorded information it holds. The Act provides the public with a general right of access to information from all public authorities, including local authorities.

Tenderers who consider that any information submitted/to be submitted in the tender or contract documents should not be disclosed to a third party because of its sensitivity should provide the Authority with a schedule of information. The schedule should contain full reasons as to why it may prejudice the commercial interest of the tenderer or involve the disclosure of a trade secret and state reasonable timescales during which that information should not be disclosed.

7. **USE OF COLLABORATIVE CONTRACTS AND FRAMEWORKS**

Cheshire Constabulary may use collaborative contracts or frameworks to obtain goods/services/works. The framework agreements may have been established by another police force or public body to allow us to purchase without the need to tender. Where there are multiple suppliers on a framework, we may conduct a mini-competition between those suppliers to establish a call-off contract. If we are using a framework, the opportunity will not be advertised and only the suppliers on the framework are eligible to be able to quote.

8. **HOW TO CONTACT US**

Should you wish to contact us about a specific tender please use the Question and Answer functionality within www.bluelight.gov.uk

If you have a more general query about our procurement process, please contact us by e-mail at procurement@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

The Office for Government Commerce and Business Link have produced a document called Tendering for Public Contracts A Guide for Small Businesses , which you may find helpful. It can be obtained from: <http://www.supply2.gov.uk/pdfs/file39469.pdf>