



The Lancashire Supplier Charter

**How we will work together to
deliver for Lancashire**



Document Control

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Foreword

Lancashire County Council works with a wide range of suppliers, providers and partners to deliver services that matter to residents, businesses and communities across Lancashire.

This Charter sets out a clear and practical way of working together. It is intended to support stronger relationships, clearer expectations and more consistent engagement across commissioning, procurement and contract management.

The Council operates in a challenging and uncertain environment. Demand is growing, resources are under pressure and the way public services are delivered continues to change. In that context, the quality of our relationships with suppliers and partners matters more than ever.

This Charter is not intended to replace contracts, procurement rules or legal obligations. It sets out the behaviours, commitments and shared expectations that help those formal arrangements work well in practice.

Our ambition is to work openly, proportionately and constructively with the market, making best use of public money and supporting better outcomes for Lancashire's residents.

Councillor David Dwyer
Lancashire County Council
Cabinet Member for Resources,
Property & Efficiency



1. Introduction

Why We Need a Charter

Local Government operates in a challenging and uncertain environment. Demand is growing, resources are under pressure, and the landscape we all work in is ever changing.

Lancashire County Council is a large and complex organisation, and we know we cannot deliver for residents on our own. Each year, we work in partnership with external suppliers to deliver over £1 billion of services.

We have listened to feedback from suppliers and colleagues and recognise that how we work together needs to evolve. We need clearer expectations, stronger relationships and more consistent ways of working – built on trust, openness and collaboration.

This Lancashire Supplier Charter (the Charter) is about resetting how we work with suppliers. It sets a shared direction and creates the foundations for a long-term partnership journey – tackling challenges together, making best use of public money, and delivering better outcomes for Lancashire's residents.

Purpose of the Charter

The Charter sets out how we work together and what we expect from each other to create value for residents through strong, open partnerships.

It applies to existing, previous and potential future suppliers and partners. It signals the shared standards, behaviours and expectations that guide our relationships across commissioning, procurement and contract management. By being clear about how we work together, we create consistency, trust and confidence on all sides.

We recognise the critical role suppliers and partners play in delivering public services. There are many examples of where this already works really well. This Charter provides a simple framework that supports effective collaboration, proportionate decision-making and the best use of public money.

The Charter focuses on five core areas:



These themes set a shared foundation for working well together and delivering better outcomes for Lancashire. The Charter operates within, and is consistent with, the Council's constitution, the statutory procurement requirements and wider public law obligations. It does not override existing contractual arrangements or legal requirements. Where expectations go beyond minimum legal requirements, they reflect the ways of working we look for in strong, effective partnerships and will apply to existing contracts where agreed by both parties.

2. Our Shared Principles

These principles reflect what we want to see at the heart of how we work together. They are shaped by feedback from colleagues, suppliers and partners, and guide our day-to-day relationships across commissioning, procurement and contract management.

They are about how we work together, not rules to follow – and they support the commitments and expectations set out in this Charter.

1

Working Together Through Partnership and Co-design

We want to work in partnership, engaging early through sharing ideas, listening to each other and co-designing solutions together, ensuring flexibility and compliance in line with legislation.

2

Embracing Technology and Innovation

We want to make best use of technology, data and new approaches to improve services, efficiency and outcomes.

3

Being Flexible and Adaptable

We want to respond positively to change – adapting to a complex and evolving landscape and finding practical solutions together. Challenges are seen as opportunities.

4

Managing Risk Responsibly

We want to surface issues early, manage risk proportionately and work together to maintain continuity and resilience.

5

Delivering Social Value Together

We want our work together to create wider social, economic and environmental benefits for Lancashire's communities.

6

Fairness and Transparency

We want fair, proportionate and transparent approaches, with consistent processes and clear decision-making.

3. Our Commitments to You

“We are committed to building strong, transparent partnerships with suppliers, providers and partners.”

We are committed to being a fair, proportionate and transparent buyer. The commitments below set out the clear roles we will play in our relationships with you. We want this to feel the same irrespective of which part of the Council you interact or work with.



Clear and Transparent Information

We will provide timely, accessible information on opportunities and decisions, so suppliers and partners understand how we operate and how decisions are made.



Regular and Meaningful Engagement

We will engage with suppliers and partners early and regularly, using proportionate approaches that make it easier to do business with the Council. This helps you to prepare and plan ahead.



Support for SMEs and VCSFEs

We will work to reduce barriers, apply proportionate approaches, and provide guidance and engagement to help a diverse range of organisations work with us.



Embedding Social Value

We will integrate social value into contracts and provide clarity and support so suppliers understand expectations and how delivery will be managed.



Prompt and Fair Payment

We commit to paying suppliers and partners in line with contractual terms where contract conditions are met. We want it to be easy for you to transact with us.



Ethical Behaviour and Safe Reporting

We will uphold high ethical standards and provide confidential routes for raising concerns, ensuring they are handled fairly and promptly.

4. What We Need From You

For our partnership to work, there are things we need from you. Most importantly, we need you to deliver, take responsibility for performance, and work with us openly, confidently and in good faith.

To make the Charter work in practice, we need suppliers and partners to:



Act Legally, Ethically and Professionally

Meet all legal, regulatory and contractual requirements, and operate with integrity across your business and supply chain.



Deliver Quality, Value and Outcomes

Provide reliable, fit-for-purpose goods and services that deliver value for money and support continuous improvement over the life of the contract.



Communicate Openly and Honestly

Share accurate information on performance, risks and issues, raise concerns early, and work with us to resolve them constructively.



Deliver Social Value in Practice

Make and deliver proportionate social, economic and environmental commitments that support Lancashire's communities and priorities.



Manage Your Workforce and Supply Chain Responsibly

Apply fair employment practices and promote equality and inclusion. Pay your suppliers or partners promptly and ensure your supply chain is ethical, resilient and transparent.



Work With Us Constructively

Engage professionally with Council processes, contract management activity and engagement opportunities, contributing ideas and insight where this adds value.



Manage Risk and Service Continuity

Identify and manage risks proactively, support contingency planning where required, and help maintain continuity of critical services.

5. Market Development and Support

Working With Us

We want Lancashire's markets to be open, competitive and accessible, to organisations of any size – today and in the future. We strive to support local economic growth and deliver reliable services to our residents through a sustainable Lancashire market.

Our commitment

- Promote fair access to opportunities, reducing unnecessary barriers wherever possible.
- Support competition and choice, including for new suppliers and market entrants through management of risks, balanced requirements and access to information.
- Share information and insight to help suppliers understand demand, capacity and future direction.
- Take proportionate action where markets are fragile or services are critical, to protect continuity for residents.
- Encourage innovation through co-design conversations and maintained supplier relationship management.

Suppliers and partners can support this by:

- Sharing insight on demand, capacity, risk and innovation to support planning and co-design opportunities.
- Collaborating with others, including SMEs and VCSFES and through the Council's Consortium Exchange.
- Exploring new and flexible delivery approaches that improve outcomes and value.

Commissioning – Our New Approach

Our focus is on being clearer, more open and more consistent, so services are better designed, outcomes are stronger and working relationships are mutually beneficial.

What we are focusing on:

Engaging Earlier

We will engage suppliers regularly and earlier to understand capacity, test ideas and shape services before decisions are made.

Designing Services Around Outcomes

We will use data, insights, and feedback to design services that respond to real needs and deliver value for residents, whilst considering co-design through engagement and cross-functional teams.

Providing Greater Clarity

We will give clearer signals and information about future opportunities, priorities and routes to market to help suppliers plan and prepare.

Strengthening Commercial Capability

We are investing in skills, standards and contract management so we are a better and more confident partner.

You can support this by:

- Engaging early and openly when invited to shape outcomes.
- Sharing insight, ideas and alternative delivery approaches.
- Preparing for opportunities using published pipelines and engagement activity.
- Engaging in development opportunities to improve skills, for example Social Value Portal use, accessing information and understanding how to do business with us.

Together, this approach helps us design better services and deliver stronger outcomes for Lancashire.

We are raising our game in how we commission services, learning from experience.

6. Delivering the Charter

This is our Charter that sets out a shared way of working that applies across the Council, with every supplier and partner we do business with today or in the future. We want to be responsible and accountable for delivering on the commitments that are set out.

The Charter will only work if people see and feel the difference. We will not immediately get this right. Trust and partnerships take time to evolve, but this Charter provides a clear signal of our intent and our intention to think and act differently.

How this will feel for you:

Delivery enabler		What this means
Commercial capability and skills		Council staff will be supported through training, guidance and access to specialist support, helping ensure suppliers work with confident, capable and informed teams.
Regular engagement and feedback		Suppliers will be engaged through a structured programme of events, forums and feedback routes, supporting open dialogue, learning and continuous improvement.
Clear visibility of opportunities		Suppliers will have access to an up-to-date contracts register, helping them understand current contracts and plan for future opportunities.
Clear standards and escalation routes		Suppliers can expect published performance expectations and clear routes for resolving issues, supporting fair, proportionate and consistent contract management.
Proportionate contract management		Contracts will be managed in a consistent and proportionate way, based on risk, value and criticality – focusing on performance, outcomes and constructive problem-solving.

7. Measuring Success

The Charter is successful when it supports strong, transparent and productive relationships, leading to better services, better value and better outcomes for residents.

How We Will Review and Measure Progress

- The Charter will be reviewed bi-annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- We will develop and use a set of indicators and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with an aim to measure delivery of the Council's commitments, performance across commissioning, procurement and contract management activity, and supplier delivery, performance and values expected under this Charter.
- Performance and progress will be reported annually to Council leadership, providing oversight, accountability and learning to support continuous improvement.

Understanding Impact

Alongside wider performance information, an annual Net Promoter Score (NPS) will be used to understand supplier confidence and experience of working with the Council, helping us track how the Charter is working in practice and where changes are needed.



This approach allows us to track the impact of the Charter over time, reinforce good practice and focus improvement effort where it matters most.

"Success relies on shared responsibility – for us to deliver our commitments consistently, and suppliers and partners to deliver their commitments with confidence, accountability and professionalism."

8. Feedback and Engagement

Feedback

Feedback on the Charter, commissioning, procurement, contract management or supplier engagement activity is welcomed and encouraged. Feedback can be provided through:



Direct contact with the Commercial Function via
commercialcontractmanagement@lancashire.gov.uk



Supplier engagement events, forums and meetings

All feedback is used to improve how the Council works with the market and to strengthen delivery of the Charter in practice.

Engagement

We intend to engage with suppliers and partners regularly through a series of meet the buyer events, webinars, pre-market engagements or workshops. Please reach out to us to enquire, and we encourage collaboration and attendance at the events as much as possible – come and meet us.

Annexes

The following annexes support deeper meaning and understanding of the Charter.

Annex 1 – Understanding the Charter

Annex 2 – The Commissioning Cycle

Annex 3 – A Commercial Council

Annex 4 – Contracts Register

Annex 5 – Programme of Supplier Engagement

Annex 6 – Consortium Exchange

Annex 7 – Our Digital Platform

Annex 8 – Supplier and Community Engagement

Annex 9 – Supply Chain Resilience and Risk Management

Annex 10 – Ethical Practice, Concerns and Confidential Reporting

Annex 11 – Commercial Signals

Annex 1 – Understanding the Charter

Glossary of terms to support this Charter.

Term	Definition
Benchmarking	Comparing performance or practices against standards or peers to drive improvement.
Commissioning	The ongoing process of planning, purchasing, and evaluating services to meet community needs.
Consortium Exchange	A maintained register of suppliers who wish to collaborate with others in Lancashire – available to all.
Contract Management	Managing supplier relationships and performance to ensure contract obligations are met.
Co-design	Working together with suppliers, partners, and communities to develop solutions and services.
CPV	Common Procurement Vocabulary – a standardised classification system used in public procurement to categorise goods, services, and works.
Engagement Mechanisms	Methods used to involve suppliers and partners, such as forums, feedback channels, and digital platforms.
Innovation	Introducing new ideas, technologies, or approaches to improve services and outcomes.
Market Position Statement (MPS)	A strategic document outlining supply, demand, and future commissioning intentions to inform providers.
Market Shaping	Actions taken to influence and develop the local market, ensuring diversity, sustainability, and quality.
Performance Reporting	Measuring and sharing progress against key principles and outcomes.
Pipeline	A forward plan of upcoming procurement opportunities and contracts.
Procurement	The process of acquiring goods, works and services fairly, efficiently and lawfully, followed by the award of contracts.
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises – businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

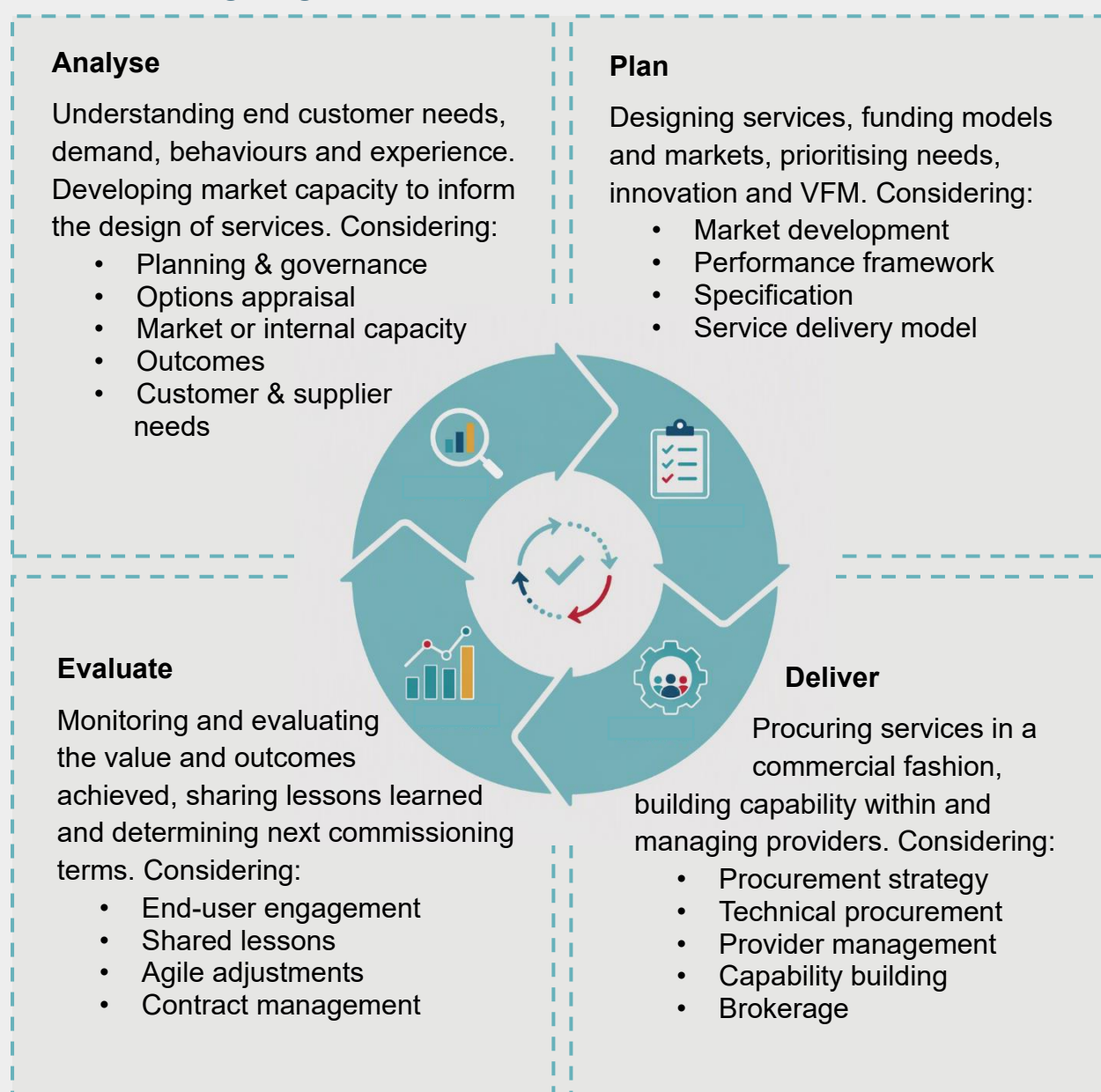
Social Value	The wider benefits created for the community through contracts, such as local jobs, sustainability, and inclusion.
Supplier Engagement	Building collaborative relationships with suppliers through early dialogue, communication and partnership working.
Supplier Incentive Scheme (SIS)	A scheme offered to suppliers to receive early payment of invoices which can lead to a small rebate.
Transparency	Openness in processes, decisions and information sharing.
VCSFE	Voluntary, Community, Social, and Faith Enterprise organisations – non-profit suppliers.
Whistleblowing	A confidential route for employers, contractors, and third parties to raise serious concerns about the Council's work without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.

Annex 2 – The Commissioning Cycle

The commissioning cycle is a structured approach used to plan, deliver, and evaluate services that meet the needs of communities. It ensures resources are allocated effectively, services are designed around customer outcomes, and partnerships with providers are managed to deliver value for money.

By following this cyclical process – typically involving analysis, planning, delivery, and evaluation – the Council can align strategic objectives with operational delivery, driving continuous improvement and better outcomes for citizens.

Commissioning Stages



Corporate Requirements

- Robust data on customer needs, trends and market capacity.
- Use insights effectively, with a focus on end achievements throughout development.
- Align objectives and develop clear governance and processes.
- Implement frameworks to monitor outcomes and manage risks effectively.
- Train staff in commercial awareness, market analysis and the importance of engagement.

Supplier Commitments

- Participate in consultations and engagements to support co-design.
- Commit to supporting local economic growth, sustainability and community benefits.
- Meet contractual obligations and ensure open communication.
- Share insights to improve service delivery.
- Work collaboratively with the Council to develop our practices and solutions.

Annex 3 – A Commercial Council

A commercial council is one that operates with a clear understanding of its financial responsibilities, market dynamics, and community priorities. It combines strategic thinking with practical delivery to ensure services are efficient, sustainable, and deliver maximum value for residents and the local economy.



Understand Risks and Value

- Identify and manage risks effectively.
- Recognise the Council's assets, spending power, and its role in driving the local economy.



Know Costs and Demand

- Understand the true costs of services and the factors influencing demand.
- Ensure resources are allocated accurately and efficiently.



Put Residents First

- Make decisions based on the needs and preferences of residents and customers, ensuring services reflect community priorities.



Use Market Insights and Manage Spending

- Apply market intelligence to guide decision-making and assess the impact on related markets.
- Manage third-party spending to support local businesses, encourage innovation, and promote fairness.



Secure Value Through Partnerships

- Monitor contracts to ensure compliance and delivery of value.
- Work collaboratively with suppliers to create added value and deliver social benefits.



Build Capability and Efficiency

- Deliver services through the most efficient structures.
- Develop staff skills and embed a commercial mindset across the organisation.
- Explore new revenue streams to support long-term sustainability.

Corporate Enablers

Training and Developing the Workforce

Invest in training to build awareness and skills. Building a commercially minded organisation starts with its people.

Incentivising Value

Mechanisms to reward efficiency, innovation and social impact to encourage behaviour change.

Different Risk and Reward-Based Approaches

Embracing flexibility to adopt tailored models for different contracts and partnerships, balancing accountability with innovation.

Annex 4 – Contracts Register

The Contracts Register is a detailed record used to track and manage contract-related information. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview of contracts, including their status, categories, responsible parties, relevant end dates and break points, financial values, and key administrative details.

The Contracts Register and pipeline is published quarterly by our Commercial Contract Management Team and can be found on the Council website:



[How to do business with the county council - Lancashire County Council.](https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-procurement/how-to-do-business-with-the-county-council/)

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-procurement/how-to-do-business-with-the-county-council/>

Key information	What this helps suppliers understand
Procurement Category	Find the contracts relevant to your business.
Contractor	Who is currently delivering the contract.
Contract Start / End Date	The current contract term and extension options.
Annual and Total Values	The potential contract value currently.
Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) Codes	Receive notifications of opportunities linked to these codes.
Relevant LCC Managers	Procurement Leads and Contract Managers who can answer queries in relation to the contract.

For any queries contact: commercialcontractmanagement@lancashire.gov.uk

Annex 5 – Programme of Supplier Engagement

Lancashire County Council operates a structured, year-round Supplier Engagement Programme designed to strengthen relationships with the market, improve access to opportunities, and shape commissioning through early, open and collaborative dialogue. The programme supports SMEs, VCSEs, strategic suppliers and new market entrants, and underpins the commitments set out in this Charter.

Key Objective

To build confident, transparent and two-way engagement with suppliers that improves understanding of how to work with the Council, reduces barriers to entry (particularly for SMEs and VCSFEs) and captures market insight to inform commissioning, procurement and contract management decisions.

Engagement Types and Frequency



Supplier Webinars (bi-monthly)

Online sessions providing practical guidance on processes, systems, social value and upcoming opportunities.



Meet the Buyer Events (quarterly)

Face-to-face networking with procurement and partners, focused on market insight, collaboration and capability building.



Strategic Supplier Meetings (annual / as required)

Senior-level engagement with key suppliers to support resilience, innovation, risk management and alignment on major contracts.



Annual Supplier & Partner Forum

A full-day event bringing together senior leadership, commissioners and suppliers to set direction, share pipeline opportunities, launch or reinforce Charter commitments, and shape future commissioning through structured insight.

Supplier engagement is central to being a First Choice Council. It enables earlier market involvement, better-informed commissioning decisions, stronger competition, innovation, and improved social value delivery – while ensuring all engagement is fair, transparent and compliant.

Details of upcoming events, opportunities and supporting guidance can be found on our website and social media. For queries:

commercialcontractmanagement@lancashire.gov.uk

Annex 6 – Consortium Exchange

The Consortium Exchange Register is a central directory managed by the Council to help organisations and businesses find and connect with potential partners to form a consortium. These partnerships can strengthen bids and improve success rates when tendering or bidding for contracts.

Any organisation can join the register by providing relevant company information. The register allows users to search for other organisations by sector, expertise, location, or project needs.

Benefits of Using the Register

- Discover new partners – find organisations with complementary skills or resources to bolster your ability to tender for contract opportunities.
- Enable collaboration – form project teams or joint bids for procurement opportunities, build network connections and consider new innovative ideas for contract deliverables.
- Share knowledge – connect with others facing similar challenges or working towards shared goals.

Note: The details you submit will be made publicly available on the Lancashire County Council website and shared with other suppliers and members of the public. This is essential for enabling collaboration and visibility within the supplier network.

Further details can be found on the Council's website:



[Consortium exchange - Lancashire County Council](https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-procurement/consortium-exchange/)

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-procurement/consortium-exchange/>

Annex 7 – Our Digital Platform

Procurement Portal (Oracle Fusion)

The Council uses Oracle Fusion as the central hub for live advertised tenders including supplier registration, tender information and bidding opportunities.

The portal covers a range of activities and information. There is robust help centre information and step-by-step guidance available.

Adverts for tender opportunities will also be published on the Council's website and the Central Digital Platform (CDP).

Key areas covered by this portal include:

- Supplier profile and contact details
- Use of classification codes and notifications
- Access to tender documents and clarifications
- Tender responses
- Notification of outcome
- Closing the loop to payments

Social Value Portal (SVP)

Where social value is an evaluation criteria, the Council may also use the Social Value Portal for the submission of commitments, evaluation and contract management of social value activity throughout the life of the contract. Not every tender will include social value.

- Social value commitments submission
- Post-award social value evidence submission

Annex 8 – Supplier and Community Engagement

Supplier Engagement

The aim is to create a diverse, resilient market that meets the needs of Lancashire's residents while supporting fair competition and sustainable growth.

Supplier engagement is the proactive process of building strong, transparent, and collaborative relationships with suppliers to deliver high-quality, value-driven services. It involves early dialogue, varied engagement programmes with clear communication, insight gathering and partnership working to encourage innovation, compliance, and social value.

Community Engagement

The goal is to deliver effective, efficient, and outcome-focused services that reinforce community capability and improve quality of life across Lancashire.

Community engagement is the inclusive approach of working with residents, voluntary organisations, and local partners to understand needs and co-design solutions. It focuses on recognising community strengths, fostering collaboration, and ensuring decisions are informed by local insight. It involves varied activities including commissioning conferences and events alongside clear communication of changes and market testing.

Strategic Supplier Partnerships

The aim is to develop joint value creation through strategic relationships with high spend suppliers, bolstering collaboration and innovation through shared knowledge.

Strategic supplier partnerships aim to move from transactional relationships through accurate tiering and segmenting of suppliers, alongside the development of tailored engagement sessions. The strategic relationships should allow shared and developed commercial acumen in both the Council and with suppliers to drive innovation and value in high spend contracts.



What This Supports

- Events to guide and provide key information.
- Proactive approach to contract management.
- Develop understanding of processes and competitions.
- Early engagement in solution design.
- Collaboration with local partners and organisations.
- Focus on achieving quality and value together.
- Clear communication routes for feedback.

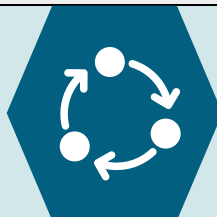
Annex 9 – Supply Chain Resilience and Risk Management

Supply chain resilience is the ability to maintain reliable, high-quality services even when the market faces disruption, shortages, financial pressures, or supplier failure. Effective risk management ensures services for residents – especially vulnerable groups – remain safe, stable, and sustainable.

What the Council does		What we expect suppliers to do
Embed robust contract management supported by the Contract Management Framework, including key activity to deliver value.		Operate responsibly and ethically – ensure modern slavery, labour standards, and environmental responsibilities are upheld at all tiers of the supply chain.
Maintain risk registers and early-warning indicators to identify supply chain issues before they escalate.		Proactively manage risks – regularly monitor and share emerging issues with the Council at the earliest opportunity so mitigations can be agreed quickly.
Apply proportionate oversight based on contract value, strategic importance, and risk rating – ensuring resources are focused where they matter most.		Maintain robust contingency and continuity arrangements to ensure services can continue safely and reliably, even where risks materialise or circumstances change.
Review financial stability and capacity of key suppliers and subcontractors to safeguard continuity of services.		Participate in contract management activity – attend review meetings, provide accurate data, contribute to joint risk discussions, and collaborate on resolutions.
Support market stability by engaging providers early, holding open discussions on pressures, and working jointly to mitigate risk.		Engage with the Council and support innovation and efficiency – attend events, propose improvements, adopt new technologies, and work with other providers where beneficial.



Use lessons learned and intelligence to strengthen market resilience over time.



Know their supply chain – maintain visibility of subcontractors, product/service dependencies, and upstream risks.

Annex 10 – Ethical Practice, Concerns and Confidential Reporting

Ethical practice means acting with integrity, openness and accountability in everything we do, and we expect the same of all our suppliers and partners. By promoting a culture where concerns can be raised safely and confidentially, we encourage suppliers to be open and honest with us so we can take swift, fair action and ensure safe, responsible and value-driven delivery across Lancashire.

Our Confidential Whistleblowing Channel

Suppliers, subcontractors and partners can raise concerns confidentially through the Council's dedicated whistleblowing routes:

- Whistleblowing Line: 01772 532500
- Email: WhistleblowingComplaints@lancashire.gov.uk
- Online Form: via the Council's Whistleblowing Referral Portal
- Confidential postal route: The Whistleblowing Controller, Internal Audit, County Hall, Preston PR1 0LD

How to Use the Channel

Suppliers should raise concerns as soon as they become aware of an issue. Concerns can include criminal activity, breaches of contract or law, health and safety risks, financial irregularities, safeguarding risks, or serious misconduct. Concerns may be submitted anonymously, though providing contact details helps the Council investigate and respond.

Why This Exists

We are committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability, and encourage suppliers to speak up where they see misconduct, risks, illegal activity, safeguarding concerns, misuse of public funds, or unethical behaviour.

All concerns are treated seriously and confidentially, and individuals are protected from victimisation when concerns are raised in good faith.

How We Respond

Once a concern is received, it is logged by the Council's Whistleblowing Controller and triaged to determine the appropriate investigation route. The Council acknowledges receipt, outlines next steps, provides indicative timescales, and keeps the whistleblower informed where appropriate. Investigations are proportionate, independent, and focused on public interest and risk. The Council will take action, share learning, and ensure concerns are handled consistently and safely.

Annex 11 – Commercial Signals

Commercial signals help suppliers understand how the Council intends to work commercially, including expectations on quality, pricing, risk, innovation, and contract performance.

How Suppliers Can Respond to Commercial Signals



Proactively propose cost-effective, innovative service models, including digital solutions and preventative approaches.



Engage openly in commercial discussions, sharing risk information early to develop joint mitigations.



Engage in commercial development opportunities such as webinars, market briefings, and commissioning events.



Prepare for tenders early using the pipeline, contract register, and commissioning intentions to plan resources and partnerships.



Adopt ethical, resilient supply chain practices, ensuring transparency, workforce stability, and robust contingency arrangements.

Shared Commitment to Skills and Commercial Development

Both the Council and suppliers will actively commit to participate in ongoing training, development, and joint learning programmes to build commercial acumen across the market, strengthening value for money, innovation, and collaborative delivery. We will commit to developing skills in contract management, risk assessment, social value, and performance improvement, and suppliers are expected to mirror this commitment, with open communication where development is needed or challenges arise.

Practical Expectations and How to Respond

What the Council Will Do

1. Provide clear and consistent commercial frameworks

- Publish transparent evaluation criteria.
- Use proportionate procurement routes – balancing simplicity with rigour.
- Set contract terms that encourage fair risk allocation, continuity of supply, and performance improvement.

2. Be explicit about commercial priorities for each market

- Highlight where the Council is seeking transformation, early intervention, prevention models, or modernisation.
- Identify sectors requiring capacity building or diversification.
- Support opportunities for collaboration through the Consortium Exchange.
- Support the development of social value contributions, commitments and management in all commissions.

3. Reinforce reliable and ethical commercial practice

- Commit to prompt payment within contractual terms.
- Use data-driven contract management to track performance, market stability, and risk.
- Support ongoing training and development for suppliers where possible.