

# How to do Business with **South Wales Fire and Rescue Service**

A guide for  
**Current and Potential  
Contractors/Suppliers**

**South Wales**  
Fire and Rescue Service



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
**De Cymru**

**Raising Awareness - Reducing Risk**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service purchases services, supplies and works that range in value from several hundred pounds to many hundreds of thousands. This provides companies of all sizes with a wide range of commercial opportunities.

Your company could potentially benefit from these opportunities.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to providing the best information possible about the opportunities that are available and the procedures that need to be followed.

This guide aims to provide information and help for current and potential contractors, consultants and suppliers to apply for the Service's contracts. The following pages explain what legislation influences the Services's tendering requirements and describe the procedures necessary to bid for work by:

- Outlining the rules that the Service must follow
- Detailing how we alert companies to the opportunities to supply the Service
- Explaining how to bid for Service's work

## 2. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH THE FIRE AUTHORITY

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is fair, non-discriminating, professional and transparent.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service was formed in 1996 as a result of the reorganisation of the Fire & Rescue Services in Wales. We currently pay around 95% of our undisputed invoices in less than 30 days.

This guide should provide sufficient information so that companies can decide whether or not to present a bid. However, it should be noted that there is much competition for

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service contracts and this guide cannot assure individual companies of success.

This is part of a fresh, new and enthusiastic approach to procurement in the Fire and Rescue Service with the aim to standardise its Procurement Methods, making opportunities visible and ensuring transparency in its processes.

### 3. SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE STRUCTURE AND CONTRACTS

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's structure has recently been formed after a major organisational review to improve service delivery to the public and associated stakeholders.

At the most senior level in the Service there are six Strategic Directors who join the Chief Fire Officer to form the Corporate Continuity Board. The Directors are responsible for overseeing a group of services and implementing corporate strategies and priorities. Reporting to the Directors are Senior Officers who are responsible for the day to day running of individual services.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service covers an area of nearly 1085 square miles (300,000 hectares) and serves a population of just over 1.4 million. The area of South Wales it serves is one of the largest Fire & Rescue Service areas within the United Kingdom, made up of rural, coastal and urban areas. The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service consists of 50 Fire Stations, and a number of other sites. We employ approximately 1700 personnel to provide our services. These personnel are Wholtime and Retained Duty System Firefighters, Control staff, uniformed officers and non-uniformed support staff.

Procurement is undertaken by the Procurement Officer located in Fire Service Headquarters. Individual officers such as the Brigade Engineer (vehicles), ICT Officer and the Building Development Officer are also involved in the procurement process.

The Service deals with contracts of varying types from one-off purchases to contracts for supplies, services or works that will last for a specific period before coming up for renewal. Effective procurement supports the Service's aim of providing high quality, value for money, sustainable services for the people of South Wales both now and in the future.

Not all of our needs are met by purchasing directly ourselves. We also make use of collaborative contracts with other emergency services and other public sector organisations. For some of these contracts you can obtain details by registering on the Value Wales web site -[www.sell2wales.co.uk](http://www.sell2wales.co.uk)

#### **4. HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

The National Procurement Website for Wales, [www.sell2wales.co.uk](http://www.sell2wales.co.uk) shows public sector contracts of all values to be awarded. Goods, services and works contracts over the European Union thresholds have to be purchased in line with the EU Procurement Directives and are advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). These can be viewed at [www.sell2wales.co.uk](http://www.sell2wales.co.uk). The sell2wales website also allows suppliers and contractors to register their company details free of charge so that they can receive e-mail updates about tender opportunities as they arise.

Emergency service contracts can also be advertised on the Blue Light Portal website, supported by the National Procurement Board and CLG. Access to the system is free for suppliers. Suppliers can register their company details on the website: [www.bluelight.gov.uk](http://www.bluelight.gov.uk)

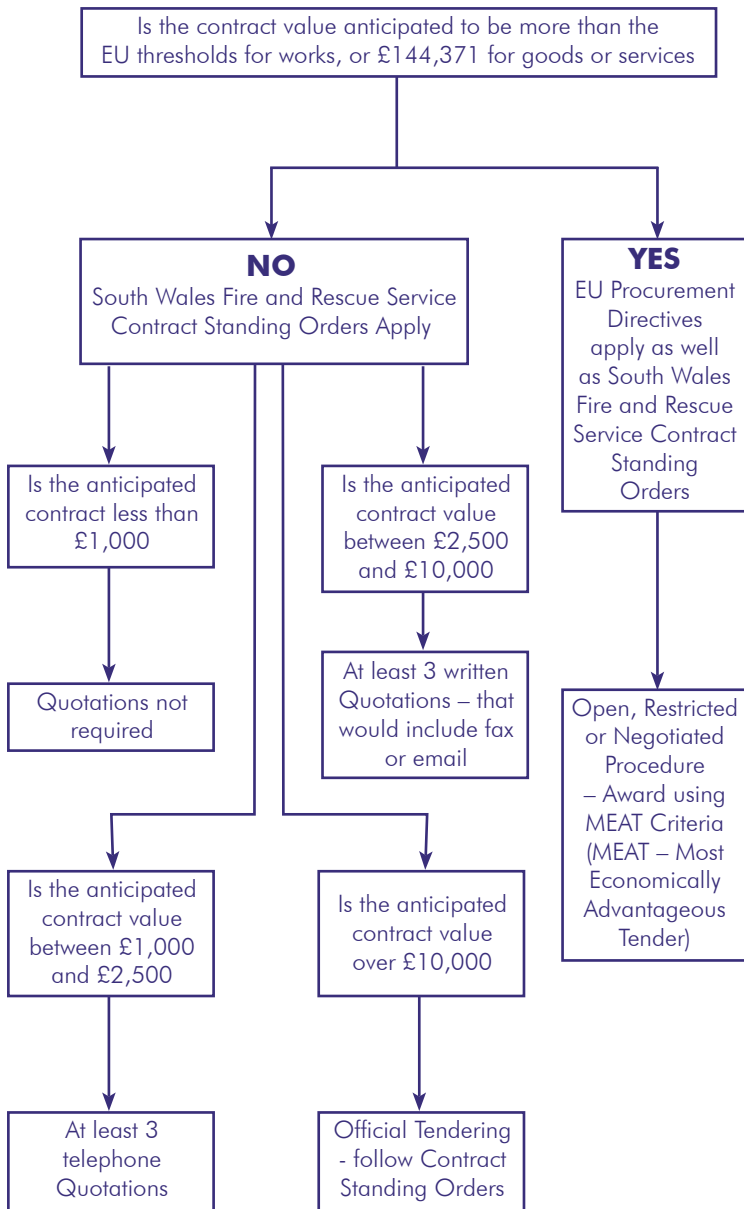
Where contracts are advertised and your company would like to be considered for a particular contract you must follow the application instructions detailed in the advertisement.

#### **5. TYPES OF PROCUREMENT**

The way in which South Wales Fire and Rescue Service approaches a purchase depends upon the estimated value and legal requirements for awarding such contracts. The Service must follow its Contract Procedures and Financial Regulations as set out in the Procurement Policy.

Overleaf is a flow chart showing the procedure Senior Officers must follow when tendering. Each contract will need to specify the award criteria for evaluating price and quality at the outset.

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## 6. TENDERING FOR CONTRACTS

Companies can either be invited to tender directly following the 'open' procedure or be sent a pre-qualification questionnaire prior to issuing an invitation to tender following the 'restricted' procedure. The purpose of a pre-qualification questionnaire is to assess the potential bidder's suitability to supply South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and ability to satisfy the contract before tenders are issued. This saves a bidder's time and effort from being spent unnecessarily on completing full tender documents.

When you have been accepted to tender for a project, the tender documentation will be sent to you. The tender documents usually contain the following information:-

- Letter of invitation and instructions
- Pricing document and/or form of tender
- Specification
- Schedule of rates and/or bills of quantities (if applicable)
- Contract conditions or conditions of purchase
- Method statement requirements (if applicable)
- Any relevant supporting information

You will be asked to complete and return your tender documents by a given time and date. The tender documents are all opened at the same time after the tender return date. Once opened, the tender documents are forwarded to the appropriate South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Officer for evaluation. Any tender documents not returned by the specified deadline will be excluded from the evaluation process.

### ***Tender Evaluation and Contract Award***

Returned tenders will be evaluated against the pre-determined criteria as specified in the tender documentation. The evaluation will focus on examining how the tender proposals will deliver the

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contract on the basis of price and quality. The balance between price and quality will depend on the particular service area. The Service will award the contract on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender. The successful supplier will be notified in writing.

### **Debriefing**

If you are not awarded the contract you will be notified in writing. Within the limits of commercial confidentiality, the Service will always endeavour to offer unsuccessful suppliers feedback to inform them why their bid failed. This information can be used to help any future bids. Being unsuccessful in one contract does not mean that a company will be unsuccessful in future. It should be noted that the Service must comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

### **Contract Performance**

Procedures exist to monitor the performance of companies carrying out contracts on behalf of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Companies are monitored to assess their compliance with pre-defined performance criteria. Your company must be capable of delivering the requirements of the contract. You should be aware that Contract Conditions will be strictly applied especially with regard to quality and general performance.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is continuously striving to improve its own performance and expects its contractors to do the same. The Service will seriously assess the position of any contractor who fails to perform to the levels required.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service contractors will be asked to comment on any performance issues reported. You should be aware that serious instances of poor performance are likely to disqualify your company from being considered for future business. The Service is not responsible for the consequences that this may have on a company's business. Examples of adverse performance would include but not limited to:

- Unacceptable quality of work
- Lack of site supervision
- Failure to deliver on time
- Inadequate control of sub-contractors
- Poor health and safety practices

### **Variations**

Variations may be needed from time to time during a contract period. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service will normally request variations in writing, except in an emergency, where instructions can be made verbally and followed up in writing.

## **7. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION YOU MAY NEED TO PROVIDE**

The amount of information required by the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service will vary in proportion to the contracts' value. Low value contracts require limited information, whilst contracts awarded by tender (>£10,000) may require more extensive information including:

### **Financial**

Companies may be asked for certain financial information relating to each of the last three years. (It may be two years in some contracts) Private limited companies and public limited companies must submit fully audited accounts as registered with Companies House. Other applicants should forward copies of financial statements, business plans or a certified statement of turnover to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. This information is used to assess the financial position of the company in relation to the size of the contract. Information is also required to check that a company is registered (if appropriate) for tax and complies with the Service's insurance requirements.

If a company has less than 3 years financial information, they may still be considered depending on the nature of the contract.

## ***Experience and Technical Ability***

Further information requested seeks to assess whether a company has the relevant experience and technical ability to carry out the categories of work and to provide the type and quality of service required. If an application relates to a specific contract, it may be necessary to provide references.

Some further questions may be asked, tailored to the needs of the individual contract. The responses and supporting evidence will be used to assess whether a company has the required level of skills and abilities to tender. This could include accreditations such as CORGI (Confederation of Registered Gas Installers), NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting).

## ***Health and Safety***

Depending upon the nature of the goods/services/works, organisations may be required to submit a copy of their Health and Safety Policy.

Services or works over £10,000 will require companies to submit information on Health & Safety.

## ***Quality Assurance***

For certain contracts including works contracts, organisations may be required to demonstrate that they have a suitable quality assurance system. This may be demonstrated by certification by an approved assessment company or by the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service reviewing the company and accepting the organisations quality manual.

## ***Equal Opportunities***

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to equal opportunity, equal access and positive outcomes. The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service aims to ensure that organisations that provide services on it's behalf comply with equal opportunities legislation and promote equality of opportunity. The Service also aims to encourage those organisations and

individuals with which it does business to observe and adhere to the principles contained within the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Equal Opportunities Policy. Copies of this policy can be found on our website: [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk)

### ***Sustainability and Environmental Care***

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to reducing its impacts on the environment and promoting sustainable development.

The Service expects its contractors to meet similar levels of environmental care and commitment.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is also committed to its Environmental Strategy and to developing a sustainable procurement policy.

### ***Electronic Trading and Purchasing Cards***

The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has a commitment to implement e-Government, which aims to increase levels of electronic business that, over time, will include electronic tendering, ordering and invoicing. The aim is to improve efficiency and reduce the costs associated with the Procurement Process, for both the Service and the supplier. It is recognised that e-business can help suppliers by opening up a supplier's products and services to a wider market.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is considering the introduction of a Purchasing Card as a payment method for certain purchases. Tenders may specify that suppliers be able to accept the Purchasing Card.

## **8. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2005**

This act gives every individual the right to request information from a public sector organisation. However, there are exemptions, for example a request for personal information about an employee.

## 9. EQUALITY IN PROCUREMENT

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service must consider its procurement activity in light of all relevant legislation: race, disability, sex, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion, belief and human rights. It is our duty to eliminate any unfair discrimination according to legislation which includes:

- (a) Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- (b) Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- (c) Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- (d) Welsh Language Act 1993
- (e) Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- (f) Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- (g) Human Rights Act 1996
- (h) The Equality Act 2006 (The Gender Equality Duty)
- (i) Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

## 10. PURCHASING CONTACTS

Further information about purchasing contracts can be obtained by contacting the following Officers:

### ***Yvonne Edwards, Supplies Officer***

Tel: 01443 232091 email: [y-edwards@southwales-fire.gov.uk](mailto:y-edwards@southwales-fire.gov.uk)

### ***Peter Cate, Building Development Officer***

Tel: 01443 232097 email: [PL-Cate@southwales-fire.gov.uk](mailto:PL-Cate@southwales-fire.gov.uk)

## 11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire County Councils for their co-operation and information on which this booklet is based.

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page.