**G 6 - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Introduction**

This document covers the activities of the Operational Procurement Team (OPT), Integrated Procurement Team (IPT), which are both part of the Finance and Regulation Directorate, and the activities of the Engineering Procurement Team (EP) of Northern Ireland Water (NI Water), hereafter referred to as The Procurement Teams. These teams are responsible for running the procurement process for goods, services and capital works for NI Water ensuring that Value for Money is achieved and that EC Procurement Directives, Regulations and established procurement policy and procedures are complied with.

The purpose of this document is to give you information on what we do and the standard of service you can expect when you deal with us. It also sets out a complaints procedure if you, as a supplier or potential supplier, feel that we have fallen short of the standards, values and principles set out in this document.

**Who does this Complaints Procedure apply to?**

NI Water does business with many organisations who are either existing suppliers or potential suppliers that want to do business with us. These relationships are important to us, as suppliers play a critical role in enabling NI Water to fulfil its obligations for the supply and distribution of drinking water and the provision of sewage services to approximately 780,000 domestic, agricultural and business customers throughout Northern Ireland.

**Our Responsibilities**

The summary responsibilities of The Procurement Teams are as follows:

* To work with suppliers and potential suppliers to help them meet the needs of NI Water
* To negotiate commercial arrangements that represent best value for money for NI Water
* To support contract managers in monitoring contract performance and resolving contract problems ;
* To advise on and ensure compliance with procurement policy, procedures and regulations throughout NI Water

**Our Values**

All those currently doing business or wishing to do business with NI Water can expect The Procurement teams to embrace the following values:

* Customer :- Putting customers first
* Colleagues:- Be customer focussed through teamwork
* Compliance:- Support the economic, social and environmental health and wellbeing of Northern Ireland
* Cash:- working to deliver best value

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**First Principles**

As an accredited Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE), we are committed to these guiding principles, in relation to all our dealings with contractors, suppliers and potential suppliers. These principles govern the administration of procurement in NI Water.

1. Transparency – we will ensure that as far as possible there is openness and clarity in procurement policy and its delivery.
2. Competitive Supply – we will procure using publicly advertised competitions unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary.
3. Consistency - suppliers can expect that NI Water will apply its procurement policy consistently for its goods, services and works requirements.
4. Effectiveness – we will meet the commercial, regulatory and socio-economic goals of Government in a balanced manner appropriate to the requirement being procured.
5. Efficiency – we will carry out all our procurement processes as cost effectively as possible.
6. Fair Dealing – we will treat suppliers fairly including protecting commercial confidentiality where required. We will not impose unnecessary burdens or constraints on suppliers or potential suppliers.
7. Integrity – we will ensure that there is no corruption or collusion with suppliers or others.
8. Informed Decision Making – we will base decisions on complete and accurate information and monitor requirements to ensure that they are met.
9. Legality – we will comply with the Utilities Contracts Regulations where they apply and other legal requirements.
10. Integration – our policies will pay due regard to Government’s other environmental, economic and social policies rather than cut across them.
11. Responsiveness – we will endeavour to meet the aspirations, expectations and needs of the community served by the procurement.
12. Accountability – we will ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to enable the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer for NI Water, to discharge their responsibilities on issues of procurement risk and expenditure.

**Your views**

We will listen and, where appropriate, act upon your suggestions / comments about the way we carry out NI Water’s procurement and how we may improve it. If you have any comments, you should contact us on the email addresses below:-

Operational / Integrated Procurement Team – sourcing@niwater.com

Engineering Procurement Team - DevAdmin@niwater.com

**If you have a complaint:-**

We aim to provide a high quality, efficient and professional service but, occasionally, things can go wrong.

If you feel we have fallen short of demonstrating our values or meeting first principles in our dealings with you and you do not receive the standard of service or information you expect or consider you are reasonably entitled to, you should immediately raise the matter with the senior member of staff in the team dealing with the particular procurement exercise. **This is Stage 1.**

This should be in writing, either by post or e-mail, briefly setting out the details of your complaint. Where possible your complaint will be dealt with immediately. If an investigation is needed we will aim to issue you with a full response within 10 working days. If it is not possible to provide a full response within this time because, for example, the matter requires a more detailed investigation you will be advised and kept informed of progress.

NI Water monitors and reports on supplier’s complaints and tries to learn from them in order to improve our approach to dealing with suppliers.

**Contact details:-**

Operational Procurement, Jane Mellor jane.mellor@niwater.com

Integrated Procurement, Stephen Truesdale stephen.truesdale@niwater.com

Asset Delivery Mark Mitchell mark.mitchell@niwater.com

Note:-

It is important to note that NI Water’s formal complaints procedure is not an appeal mechanism for tenderers who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a procurement competition and it must not be used if you are seeking a remedy under the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 or other legal action through the courts.

You are also advised that the process outlined here cannot be used to halt or delay a procurement competition**.**

**Stage 2:-** If, after receiving your response, you remain dissatisfied, you may refer your complaint to the Director of Finance and Regulation, in the case of a complaint relating to OPT or IPT. If your complaint is in relation to the Engineering Procurement Team you should refer your complaint to Paul Harper Director of Asset Delivery.

**The postal address is**

Northern Ireland Water

Westland House

Old Westland Road, Belfast, BT14 8TE

**Clearly indicate the intended recipient**

**Stage 3:-** If you are still not satisfied with the response, you may then refer the complaint to the Chief Executive, NI Water at the above address. If you do not receive a satisfactory response to your complaint from NI Water you may ask a Member of the Assembly (MLA) to refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman’s Office.

**You will be expected to have referred your complaint to NI Water before taking the matter up with Ombudsman**.

The Ombudsman, Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

BELFAST BT1 6BR

Tel: 028 90 233821, or Freephone 088 343424

Email: ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk