

Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy

Commercial & Procurement Service

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**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (“the Council” and “OCC”) is committed to creating a greener, fairer and healthier county. The Council recognise that every decision it makes, particularly in how it procures goods, works, and services, has the potential to deliver benefits beyond the normal delivery of the contract and financial value. These additional benefits, known as *social value*, enables the authority to strengthen the local economy, enhance the Oxfordshire ecosystem, and improve the wellbeing of communities.

This policy sets out the Councils approach to embedding social value into all relevant procurement and commissioning activities, ensuring OCC is a key partner, employer and place-shaper of choice for the county. It explains what social value means in practice and how the Council will work collaboratively with suppliers and partners to achieve it. A key aim of this policy will be to increase spending with local suppliers, which would support the local economy and job market.

Adoption of this policy will provide benefits that meet the Council’s Strategic Priorities, as detailed in the Council’s Strategic Plan 2025-2028, the Climate Action Framework and the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (“EDI”) Framework. Additionally, social value supports the County’s ambition to become a Marmot Place by reducing health inequalities. More information about these initiatives can be found on the Council website.¹

What is Social Value?

Social value refers to any additional economic, social, or environmental benefit generated through Council activities, including the procurement of goods, works, or services from the Council’s suppliers and their supply chains. To maximise these added-value benefits and enhance current practice, OCC and its suppliers will plan how contracts and projects can deliver social value outcomes in a flexible, proportionate, and relevant manner, as outlined in this policy.

As the outputs of this policy focus on social impact, the metrics used to measure these impacts may vary. Both qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to provide a balanced assessment of the social value outcomes.

Examples include:

- **Qualitative:** case studies, testimonials, narrative reports, and stakeholder feedback.
- **Quantitative:** number of local people employed, apprenticeships created, or volunteer hours contributed.

All metrics should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to ensure clarity, accountability, and comparability. This approach allows the Council to capture not only the scale of delivery but also the depth and quality of the impact on communities.

¹ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legislative Context

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012² (“the Act”) came into force in January 2013, cementing the responsibilities of a contracting authority when procuring contracts that are subject to the public procurement regulations (Procurement Act 2023³). The Act requires and encourages councils to take into account the ‘economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area’ in its procurement activity.

Social Value Local Priorities

The following 5 Social Value priorities form the default questions for all tenders at OCC. Only two criteria can be selected from the priorities to ensure Social Value is not unduly diluted and still has a material impact on our award decisions. When selecting two of the priorities, Service Areas must consider which of the criteria would be best delivered upon by their supplier base. This reasoning must be documented in the Procurement Strategy and should be tested through market engagement. Questions must be wholly related to the criteria selected and be able to demonstrate the social added value at the end of the contract term. Example questions will be included in guidance.

1. Early Careers Opportunities

Objective: Create pathways for young people, aged 16-24, currently not in education, employment or training (NEET)⁴ and new entrants into the workforce, supporting Oxfordshire’s ambition to be a place where everyone can reach their full potential.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier provide apprenticeships, internships, graduate schemes, or work experience placements for Oxfordshire residents?
- How will the supplier ensure opportunities are accessible to those in areas of deprivation or high unemployment, as identified in community health profiles and the Marmot framework?
- Suppliers must quantify commitments, which could be done via number of individuals supported, duration of placements, or employment outcomes.

This objective supports OCC’s priorities to create opportunities for children and young people, tackle inequalities, and work with local businesses for economic and social benefit.

² [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#)

³ [Procurement Act 2023](#)

⁴ [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

2. Supported Employment

Objective: Enable Oxfordshire residents facing barriers to employment to access meaningful work, fostering a fairer and more inclusive county.

Key aspects of this objective

- How will the supplier support people with disabilities, care leavers, carers, veterans or those with health or social challenges into employment?
- What tailored training, mentoring, or support will the supplier provide throughout the life of the contract?
- Suppliers must quantify commitments with measurable outcomes such as number of supported employees, retention rates or number of hours spent with disadvantaged individuals.

This objective directly addresses OCC's commitment to tackle inequalities, support carers, and prioritise health and wellbeing for all residents.

3. Local Area Regeneration

Objective: Invest in Oxfordshire's places and spaces, enhancing community wellbeing and supporting environmental sustainability⁵.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier contribute to the regeneration of local areas—such as improving green spaces, community facilities, or public infrastructure?
- How will the supplier support and work with partners to deliver against the objective above – augmenting or expanding existing programmes of work for greater impact?
- Will the supplier make company assets, land or buildings available for community use at or below market rate?
- Suppliers are requested to describe the scale and impact of the proposed activities, proportionate to contract value (bearing in mind this makes up 5% of the overall social value criteria).

This objective aligns with OCC's priorities to preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces, address the climate emergency, and support community resilience.

4. Youth Engagement and Support

⁵ It is expected that suppliers look to meet or exceed council objectives on improving environmental sustainability. Details on council environmental objectives can be found in the [Environment and Planning](#) pages along with supplier expectations being outlined in the [Ethical Procurement Policy](#).

Objective: Inspire and empower Oxfordshire's school aged children (aged 5-16), ensuring they have the support and opportunities to thrive.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier engage with local schools and youth groups such as Scout or Cadet groups and local charities (e.g., career talks, STEM demonstrations, site visits, work experience or preparing for the future such as personal finance talks or interview technique)?
- How will the supplier target areas of high deprivation, as outlined on the [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#)⁶, or need such as SEND in this age bracket?
- In order to measure the engagement the supplier must provide the type of engagement and milestone goals.

This supports OCC's commitment to help children and young people reach their full potential and to tackle inequalities in education and opportunity.

5. Healthy Lives; Healthy Future

Objective: Promote the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire residents, supporting both physical and mental health.

Key aspects of this objective

- How will the supplier support community health and wellbeing initiatives such as community activities to support mental health, support healthy lifestyle options, such as stop smoking, physical activity, substance use, healthy eating or create healthy and safe environments, such as homes, communities and workplaces.?
- How will the supplier support and work with partners, including VCSE groups based in Oxfordshire, for example through sponsorship, volunteering, mentoring related to health and wellbeing
- The supplier must outline their approach (potentially referencing theory of change and logic model⁷) and expected outcomes. Reference should be made to, areas of inequalities suppliers are able or intend to focus on. The [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#) should be used to provide accurate metrics.
- Suppliers must quantify their impact on the local area through a trackable metric in order for effective management of this objective.

This objective directly supports OCC's priorities to prioritise health and wellbeing, address health inequalities as a Marmot Place, and invest in preventative approaches and services.

⁶ This free resource is managed by Oxfordshire County Council and provides location specific information on the local Economy, Environment, Health and Social indicators.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/evaluation-in-health-and-wellbeing-creating-a-logic-model>

Social Value Mechanism

When procuring contracts above £100,000 in total value, Council contracts will be required to include two criteria from the five listed priorities above, each weighted at 5%, giving a combined social value weighting in a tender of 10%.

Questions and Evaluation

Procurement leads will work with service areas to choose the priorities best suited to their supplier base and design questions that suppliers must answer in their bid. These will be assessed in the same manner as quality questions in the supplier bid.

As part of their response suppliers will be required to produce a Social Value Delivery Plan (SVDP) which outlines how the supplier will meet the social value priorities selected by the Council. This should include a timeline of actions that will be taken, including key milestones, how these actions will be delivered and what SMART metrics will be used to measure the success of the implementation throughout the lifetime of the contract. Upon contract award this plan will be clarified with the supplier within the implementation phase of the contract.

A template for a SVDP can be found in Appendix 2.

Exemptions

In certain circumstances, applying the standard 10% social value weighting will not be appropriate. Commercial & Procurement Leads may deem (in consultation with the service) Social Value inappropriate for a procurement due to one of the below scenarios:

- i. The project is seeking quotes solely from Voluntary, Charity, or Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations who, by their nature, deliver inherent social value to the local communities that they serve.
- ii. The planned contract duration is less than 12-months which limits the opportunity to deliver social value initiatives. In this situation there will be no expectation for suppliers to deliver incremental social value however we would still take a supplier's inherent social value into account during the evaluation process.

Inherent social value is defined as “the natural, positive contribution that micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, as well as VCSEs, make to their local communities simply by operating as they are. This value arises from their embeddedness in the local economy, their support for local employment, and their role in sustaining community networks — benefits that cannot be replicated solely through additional financial investment.”

Unlike larger organisations, these businesses and VCSEs are often deeply rooted in their communities and already deliver social benefits through their everyday activities. Therefore, they will not always be expected to provide additional commitments on social value within their contracts, as their core operations inherently generate these positive outcomes.

For short term contracts (less than 12 months in length) social value will still be expected from a supplier in line with the stated priority. However, due to the short delivery window incremental delivery is not expected, meaning that a suppliers can deliver their social value at any point in the

contract. This also extends to call off contracts to ensure that suppliers do not overcommit to social value initiatives. For short term contracts a supplier's inherent social value will be taken into account.

The governance process for approving any exemptions is through the existing Commercial Strategy template and approvals. Social Value will be considered on a case-by-case basis for each project. Even in cases where the above exemptions apply, it is OCC's legal and regulatory duty to maximise value for Oxfordshire residents, our environment, and our economy. In the case of social value, this extends to the qualitative impact and suppliers offering additional value beyond their inherent social value will score more highly in the evaluation process.

Contract Management

Assessment of social value delivery will be performed as part of regular contract management with assistance from the Commercial & Procurement service in line with OCC's Contract & Supplier Management Framework.

Contract managers should regularly review the suppliers SVDP to ensure that the deliverables are reasonable and on track, with any issues from a supplier being raised to the contract manager in the first instance.

The frequency of reporting will be determined by the contract manager and can vary depending on the spend, length of contract or the nature of the Social Value commitments. For example, reporting may be annual, quarterly or monthly.

Non-Compliance

It is recognised that unlike deliverables as part of the contract specification social value may not be delivered at regular intervals. This may be due to funding cycles, practical limitations (such as school leavers being available around September every year) and aspects outside of a supplier's control. Suppliers will be advised through the tender documentation to factor this into their SVDP.

Should a supplier fall behind their agreed schedule of delivery or is unable to complete a delivery due to change in circumstances a meeting should be held promptly with the relevant contract manager and Commercial & Procurement lead to complete a SVDP review. Minor reasonable adjustments to the deliverables should be considered and made where appropriate, aiming to stay within the original social value priority where possible. This review should be documented through the normal contract change control process to capture the new agreed deliverables.

In the case that suppliers fail to improve following a SVDP review, the decision may be made by Commercial & Procurement to apply the contractual service credits. The value of these service credits will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the value is proportional to the contract value and will be set as part of the tender exercise.

OCC reserves the right to audit any social value deliverables throughout and at the end of a contract to ensure that social value has been delivered to the agreed standard (as outlined in the SVDP).

Service Credits

Service credits will be applied to suppliers if there is clear evidence that they have not delivered the agreed social value after appropriate remediation steps, or if they have been found, through audit, to report their social value delivery inaccurately.

The value of service credits will be fairly matched to the extent of the supplier's non-delivery, and will be determined individually for each situation. These values will be calculated using the approach set out in Appendix 2 of this document, and in every case, the total amount of service credits relating to social value will not exceed 10% of the contract's total value.

All service credits will be ringfenced and shared equally across the five Social Value Priorities. The funds from these credits will be used for projects proposed by service areas, providing those projects directly support a social value priority.

Governance

Oxfordshire County Council will periodically review this Social Value Policy in line with any relevant changes in legislation or public procurement policy.

To further communicate this Policy's performance and progress to all stakeholders, the Council will release an annual Social Value Statement to outline key areas of focus, future targets, successes and to communicate key messages to staff, partners, suppliers and other locally based organisations impacted by the Council's social value performance.

As part of the social value commitment undertaken by OCC and the supplier, an annual survey will be sent out to suppliers, completed with the contract manager. This will allow the Council to obtain accurate and current information for the Social Value Statement.

Appendix 1: Social Value Delivery Plan Template

Below is an example of a Social Value Delivery Plan Template (SVDP) which includes key elements which need to be detailed by the supplier. Whilst it is encouraged to use the standardised template for bidding, suppliers may wish to provide this Delivery Plan in another format for contract management (such as Excel or a dashboard)

Ref	Priority	Action	By When?	Impact Measure	Committed Value (£)
1	Which of OCC's Social Value Priorities are you responding to?	What specific action(s) will you be taking?	What milestones will exist / when will you complete your action?	How will we measure the successful social impact you will have through delivery of this action(s)?	Please outline how much this action will cost over the life of the contract.
2					
3					
4					

Appendix 2: Social Value Non-Delivery Calculations

For each contract two social value priorities should be selected, these are weighted at equal importance, 5% each. If both priorities are fully delivered, no service credits are due. If there is partial or non-delivery, each social value priority will be calculated separately.

The supplier provided metric (from the SVDP) will be used to measure the delivery percentage for each priority.

Calculation Equation

$$\text{Service Credit (£)} = \text{Agreed Action Value} \times (1 - \text{Delivery \%})$$

Where:

Agreed Action Value = The cost/value agreed in the SVDP.

Delivery % = Delivered Value ÷ Promised Value × 100.

(1 – Delivery %) = Proportion of undelivered commitment.

Worked Example

Contract Value: £1,000,000

80% delivery on apprenticeships and 60% delivery on community health. % gained from contract management metrics and metrics provided by the supplier.

Actions and Agreed Values from SVDP:

Social value action	Agreed value (£)
Apprenticeships	£12,000
Community health workshops	£8,000
	Total £20,000

Delivery Performance:

Action	Promised	Delivered	Delivery %	Non-Delivery %	Service credit (£)
Apprenticeships	10	8	80%	20%	20% of £12,000 = £2,400
Community health workshops	200 hrs	120 hrs	60%	40%	40% of £8,000 = £3,200
					Total Service Credit Due: £5,600