



What you need to know to win tenders



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Successful tendering can be an advantageous method of securing a certain number of weekly hours for your domiciliary care service. As such, you will ensure that you consistently have sufficient hours for your carers, moreover it is unlikely that your hours will ever become less, if anything, it is almost certain that they will increase. Whilst this is great for the books in principle and you can put the flags out, there are several things to consider before you press ahead and tender for three-year contracts.

How this guide can help you

This guide aims to demonstrate how the local authority tendering process works and top tips to secure you a bid.

First thing's first, find your tenders

Tenders are advertised on your local authority website, if you haven't already registered, sign up to use their tendering software, login and away you go. You may wish to tender for multiple contracts in multiple boroughs/counties, each local authority is independent and therefore may have a slightly different format, although the principles are the same.

Some local authorities have a preferred provider list. This means that they will not issue any contracts (including spot purchases) to any provider that is not on the list. This is a method of ensuring that they contract care packages through them with desirable providers.

Think it over, are you tender ready?

Now, before you even consider completing an application, there are several mandatory items to think through-

- Registration** – is the business registered with the CQC, the governing body for health and social care? This is essential to successful bids and is often tied to a certain CQC rating too, such as good or above
- Insurance** – does the business have sufficient insurance cover to provide the services required? Local authorities require evidence that the organisation has adequate cover, and stipulate the minimum liability cover required to work for them successfully (they also ask for this to be updated and evidenced annually)
- Information security** – do you have systems in place that demonstrate your data protection protocols? Have you completed your annual ICO subscription?
- Business continuity plan** – how will you provide your service during high levels of sickness and adverse weather conditions?
- Staffing** – do you have sufficient staffing levels to meet the hourly demand? If not, what is your recruitment and retention plan?
- Technology** – digital care recording and electric call monitoring are widespread in the industry; this is often a local authority stipulation for successful bids. Are you willing to implement this if you haven't already?
- If your local authority has a preferred provider list, they may have split the main tender into Tiers; Tier 1 and Tier 2 providers for example. Tier 1 providers may wish to win a contract for many block hours each week or month whereas Tier 2 providers prefer to be able to take on spot contract work for a local authority without being committed to hours in bulk. Once you're a successful Tier 2 provider you will either be emailed prospective individual care packages, or you will need to login to a portal to bid for spot contracts (individual care packages). Consider this when applying (if applicable) and think about which tier you are comfortable with, in line with your company objectives
- How much experience within this part of the care sector do you have? Some of the questions are evidence based and you will need to demonstrate your knowledge by providing examples

Next steps

So, you have looked through the list above and are happy and willing to go further...

Do your maths

- Is the contract viable for your longer-term plans as a provider?
- Pricing** – is the pricing fixed at a certain rate that bidders must agree to meet? Has there been a price range stipulated that bidders must bid within? Is this realistic?
- Consider the potential for future uplifts. This is essential if the contract is for several years, what is the suggested annual percentage increase?
- Will the price cover the cost of your hourly rates, travel time and mileage as well as training costs, pensions, holiday, and office overheads? Ensure that you dedicate time exploring this and confirm that you will be operating within the national minimum wage. Has the Commissioner stipulated that you must pay staff the National Living Wage?

PQQ Pre-Qualification Questionnaire

To apply to tender, providers must complete a PQQ document first, following this, successful applicants are invited to formally tender. These online documents are lengthy, ranging from simple name and address questions to financial stability, as well as some more in-depth questions where, as a provider, you will be required to evidence your knowledge of providing good and quality care services and how you put this into practice. Ensure you allow enough time to complete the in-depth questions thoroughly.

- Check the evaluation criteria, there should be guidance alongside each tender opportunity that indicates how each question is weighted. Some questions will be an immediate pass or fail, review these questions first, whereas others will be percentage based
- Financial assessment** – local authorities look for evidence of financial stability, credit checks, scores, healthy profit margins and for larger contracts there is often a minimum turnover stipulated
- TUPE** – does a Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) apply to the tender opportunity and what would this mean for your service?
- Capacity requirements, contractual obligations, delivery requirements and expectations, can you meet the demand for the number of hours? How will you retain your staff and recruit new candidates?
- What are the stipulations for subcontracting work, should it be needed?

- Is it possible to apply by forming a consortium? Some providers may wish to tender but may not feel able to accommodate all the contracted hours, in these instances willing providers have been known to form a consortium, merging together to form a successful collaboration for delivering the contract
- How can you provide added value? Commissioners increasingly request that providers add value to the community, in the form of apprenticeships or setting a quota for jobs during the contract's lifetime
- Ensure you have a full set of current policies and procedures, some of these are mandatory and will be checked and needed to be uploaded with your tender. At QCS we offer an entire suite of up-to-date policies specifically for domiciliary care, ensuring that providers always meet regulatory requirements in terms of policy
- Completing your method statements and demonstrating care quality. In terms of percentage weighting, this area weighs heavily. This section is your opportunity to showcase your skills, knowledge, and quality care provision as a provider. Dedicate plenty of time to consider these questions, ensuring you have enough space to write, review and add to your answers if necessary. Think about how you meet the specification and be sure to include examples in your answer. Get in touch with Your Tender Team to discover how they can either write or review your tender response.

PQQ ITT – Invitation to Tender

Once your PQQ application has been successful you will be invited to formally tender. This is the area where you can fully implement your previous considerations on budget and uplifts moving forward.

PQQ ITT – Invitation to Tender

If this process appears overwhelming, there are companies available to assist providers in the procurement process – you don't have to go it alone.

Contact [Your Tender Team](#) to see how they can help write or review your tender response

Want to know where to find the latest tenders to put in a bid? Visit:

Your local authority or borough website, or

[GOV.UK – Contracts finder](#)

[GOV.UK – Find a Tender](#)

Domiciliary Care Tender Checklist

Checkpoint	Guideline	Yes	No	Action/Comments
Is the business registered with the CQC?	<i>You can complete your registration at: CQC – Before you apply</i>			
Does the tender stipulate a minimum CQC rating/minimum length of trading, and do you meet this?	<i>E.g. Good.</i>			
Is there a minimum turnover/ financial standing requirement set by the authority?	<i>If so, confirm you meet it.</i>			
Does the tender stipulate that you need to have an office in the area in order to be successful?	<i>Some local authorities may stipulate the need to have an office in the same county or within a certain radius.</i>			
Does the business have sufficient insurance cover?	<i>Check the local authority guidelines.</i>			
Have you completed your ICO subscription?	<i>ICO - Renew</i>			
Do you have digital software for rostering and care planning in place?	<i>There are many companies that provide this. Often, providers have one provider for rostering and one for digital care planning.</i>			
Have you checked the pass/fail requirements of the tender?	<i>These will be found on the local authority tender website.</i>			
Do you have a business continuity plan?	<i>Use our QCS business continuity template.</i>			
Do you have a full set of policies and procedures in place?	<i>QCS has a full suite of domiciliary care policies and procedures.</i>			
Is this a suitable tender opportunity?	<i>Can you provide the service and does it align with your longer-term goals as a provider?</i>			
Do you provide this sort of service?	<i>Consider if the specification meets the current service that you offer.</i>			
What examples do you have of providing this service?	<i>Make a list of examples that demonstrate this.</i>			

Does this fit with your current workload?	<i>Can you accommodate this contract with your existing staff?</i>			
Do you have the current resources available?	<i>Consider admin staff, carer work patterns and availability.</i>			
Do you have a staff retention plan?	<i>Create one if you haven't already. Consider amendments to your QCS recruitment plan.</i>			
Will TUPE apply?	<i>Only applies when taking over a current business or transfer of staff. A transfer of undertakings is when a service is transferred to a new provider. Consider your experience of this and seek advice if needed.</i>			
Is subcontracting possible?	<i>This information for the relevant tender will be available on the local authority tender website.</i>			
If yes, do you have links to potential subcontractors already?	<i>Compile your list of agency providers.</i>			
What are the cost implications of subcontracting?	<i>Obtain the agency provider's prices and create a list.</i>			
What is the geographical area? Do you cover this already?	<i>Get a map and outline the area. Is it rural? Is it heavily populated? What are the potential implications of your travel time and mileage costs within this area. You may need to amend your business or service development plan.</i>			
Do you have previous experience of working with this local authority?	<i>If yes, do you have a good working relationship with the local authority?</i>			
If yes, what is the experience with timekeeping on settling invoices?	<i>Does the local authority pay in a timely manner? Are there long delays in payment arising from invoice discrepancies when providing additional care? Consider the potential impact of this on cashflow.</i>			
Have you checked your local authority protocols for tiers?	<i>You will find this information on the local authority website.</i>			

Have you checked your capacity capability so that you have a gauge of the volume of work you can comfortably cope with?	<i>How many additional staff may you need to hire?</i>			
Will it be necessary to have more senior patch-based staff?	<i>Consider how many additional senior staff you will require to maintain the requirements to fully support carers out on the patch.</i>			
If yes, what will the cost implications be?	<i>Consider your rate of pay for senior staff.</i>			
Is the tender pricing viable?	<i>Ensure that you consider your total overheads and profit margins. Can you deliver a service with the rates offered by the tender?</i>			
Do the suggested local authority uplifts match your own forecast increases?	<i>It's important to complete a forecast exercise of your own so that you have a clear idea of the rate the business should charge in the future to remain sustainable.</i>			
Are there any pricing expectations set by the authority?	<i>Ensure that you review these.</i>			
Are you applying as a consortium?	<i>Is this a suitable alternative option for you as a provider?</i>			
Do you have good, positive connections with the other provider/providers?	<i>Create a list of positive connections that you already have. Consider new connections you could make.</i>			
Have you considered added value you will bring to the contract?	<i>Can you offer apprenticeships to school leavers? Social value impact? Local recruitment?</i>			
Have you taken time to consider how your answers to the method statements/quality questions clearly demonstrate your suitability as a provider?	<i>Ensure that you include clear examples of how you meet the criteria set in the question.</i>			
Have you checked that you meet all elements of the specification and requirements?	<i>Read all documentation thoroughly.</i>			