

Alison Caldwell
Treasury Officer of Accounts

Public Spending Directorate
Room S15
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGOR BT19 7NA
Tel No: 028 91858249 (x 68249)
email: alison.caldwell@finance-ni.gov.uk
and joan.braniff@finance-ni.gov.uk



FD (DoF) 08/17

16 October 2017

Dear Finance Director

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES INCLUDING CONSULTANTS – UPDATE TO FD (DFP) 07/12

Purpose of this letter

1. This letter is to notify relevant staff of factual amendments made to the guidance on *Use of Professional Services including Consultants* which issued previously under cover of FD (DFP) 07/12. The main principles within the guidance remain unchanged.
2. The refreshed guidance is available on the AFMD website under the original FD reference number - FD (DFP) 07/12.

Background

3. Following a change in procurement policy on the extent of Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) involvement in the procurement of low value consultancy, DoF has undertaken a factual review of the 2012 guidance on the *Use of Professional Services including Consultants*. This has included consulting with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and other relevant DoF business areas (Business Consultancy Services (BCS), Supply Division, Strategic Policy Division (SPD), Pensions Branch and Account NI) to ensure the guidance remains factual given the passage of time.

Changes Made

4. As a result of this some changes have been made to the guidance issued under cover of the original FD letter. The main change relates to the inclusion at Chapter 4 para 4.2.1 to take account of the change in procurement policy with regards to the extent of CoPE involvement in the procurement of low value consultancy. Other changes made relate to :-

- reflecting that Business Consultancy Services (BCS) now sits within Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD) and provides a wider range of services para 3.1.4;
- the requirement to engage with BCS to establish if it has the capability or capacity to undertake assignments before engaging external professional services is reflected in Key Principle 2 on page 15;
- a new step added into the flow charts at Annex 1a and 1b under “Use Internal Resource” to reflect if a charge is being applied by an internal resource then a business case should be prepared to get the authority to procure and the appropriate approvals should be obtained;
- including a reference to Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and other public sector organisations as possible providers of internal consultancy services para 2.4.1;
- reflecting that Account NI codes are also available on the Account NI portal in each department’s Chart of Accounts para 2.1.1;
- minor wording changes relating to the section on pensions due to changes in NICS pension schemes paras 4.5.4-4.5.5;
- business cases - the inclusion of a new bullet point at paragraph 3.6.3 (previously 3.6.4) on detailing potential risks and uncertainties; and
- removal of the previously numbered paragraph 3.6.3 - as this was more reflective of HM Treasury guidance.

The guidance has also been refreshed to take account of new departmental names following restructuring etc.

5. Departments should also note that an updated business case template for the use of professional services including external consultancy has been developed. This is available on the AFMD website under the Consultancy Co-ordinator Forum supplementary guidance. A minor amendment to the Account NI Codes for Research has been made. "Surveys" has been removed from Account NI code 55210 P – Third Party Research. These codes are also available on the AFMD website under the Consultancy Co-ordinator Forum supplementary guidance.

Action to be taken

6. Departments should ensure that this FD letter is brought to the attention of relevant business areas, agencies, NDPBs and sponsored bodies.
7. Any queries from departments relating to this guidance should be addressed in the first instance to the appropriate DoF Supply Officer. In the case of sponsored bodies, any queries should initially be directed to the sponsor department.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison Caldwell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

ALISON CALDWELL
Treasury Officer of Accounts