

# Member Insight Report 2026



# A snapshot of social housing procurement

Welcome to this year's Member Insight Report.

It captures the hopes, fears and bug bears of procurement professionals working in local authorities and housing associations across the UK.

From resourcing and perceptions of procurement to grappling with new legislation, our annual survey findings offer important insights into the current state of play in the sector.

We have analysed the data from over 40 social landlords to draw out key trends and offer advice on overcoming challenges and seizing the opportunities that will support your procurement function to grow and fulfil its true potential.



Guy Stapleford, Head of Consultancy Services, Procurement for Housing

## Key findings from this year's survey

 <p>35% of procurement teams have grown in size</p>	 <p>40% of respondents expect their procurement function to expand again over the next <b>12 months</b></p>
 <p>47.5% of procurement teams still feel insufficiently resourced</p>	<p>Just over <b>8 in 10</b> believe procurement's standing in the sector has risen</p>
<p><b>"Compliance"</b> remains the term most associated with procurement but it's increasingly seen as <b>"strategic"</b> and <b>"value-adding"</b></p>	 <p>Readiness for the new procurement regime is mixed as we move into <b>year two</b></p>
 <p>75% of respondents have updated policies and procedures</p>	<p>Around <b>1/3 of respondents</b> say they have visibility across <b>80-100%</b> of expenditure</p>

## Capacity remains the No.1 challenge

for procurement teams



## Procurement Act 2023

### It's now more than a year since the Procurement Act went live. How are organisations adapting to the new regime?

One of the most positive trends to emerge from this year's survey is the degree to which housing organisations have got up to speed with the new legislation.

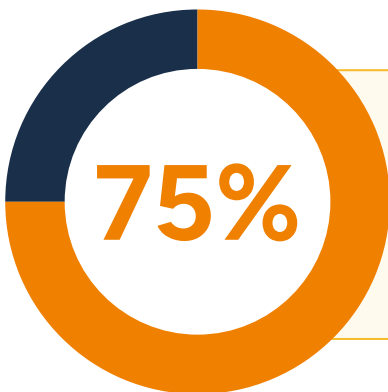
Overall, 75% of respondents said they have updated policies and procedures – a 20-point jump from 2025 and a clear sign that more organisations have those all-important foundations in place to not only ensure compliance but also move towards a more mature, strategic procurement function.

However, almost one in five (18%) have not carried out an update and therefore run the risk of being the subject of complaints and legal challenges through poor governance and delivery. Digging a little deeper, some 43% of respondents said they still have significant or some changes to make to comply with the Act and a quarter either haven't (18%) or are unsure (7%) they have updated policies to reflect the new regulations. Together, these organisations are also missing out on the advantages of having a robust procurement governance framework in place.

The survey also found 21% are yet to award a new contract under the Act. This isn't surprising given last year's Member Insight Report showed only around half of respondents planned to procure goods and services under the new regime within the first six months of it going live.

It does suggest, however, very mixed buyer readiness across the sector and reflects the degree to which many organisations are still using frameworks procured under the previous regime. Even in construction, a historically low-framework market, 27% of contracts are now awarded via frameworks\* – nearly double the proportion seen four years ago.

This is a period of transition as the sector finds its feet and buyers are potentially running procurement across the two regimes. Data around the notices being placed backs this up – more early-stage notices in respect to early market engagement and tender notices. This suggests the essence of transparency has been embraced, but procurement approaches are still conservative.



of respondents have updated policies and procedures in light of the Procurement Act – up 20 points from 2025

\* Tussell's 2026 Public Sector Procurement Frameworks Report

## Challenges and opportunities

The complexity of new processes and ensuring compliancy with the new Act were among the most commonly cited challenges in this year's survey. Comments included:

*"Way too much extra admin – the Act creates more work."*

*"Both the legislation and processes are new, which makes work inefficient."*

However, using new procurement to modernise processes came out as a key opportunity, reflecting a growing appetite to play a more strategic role. Comments included:

*"[There's an] opportunity to increase flexibility and relevance of procurement."*

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A significant proportion of organisations are still playing catch-up with the new legislation. Having a robust governance framework is non-negotiable – your policies and procedures are the foundation for driving compliance and mitigating the risk of complaints and challenge. A clear, well-communicated framework ensures that everyone in the organisation understands their role and responsibilities.

It's encouraging that the majority of organisations are up to speed. This will bring greater visibility and transparency, which are among the changes the Act is designed to facilitate. But the legislation should also be the catalyst for investing in a more professionalised approach to procurement. We can see the early signs of that in the data with the growth of some procurement teams. If we view this as a roadmap, while year one was about getting process and procedures in place, year two can be focused on advancing towards the next milestone and making those vital connections, particularly with contract management, in order to drive value.

We expected framework usage to rise coming into the Act and that's precisely what's happening. For those that are struggling for resources or lack the in-house expertise – particularly smaller organisations – they offer a fast, cost-effective and compliant route to market. They can also free up resource to devote more time towards developing a more mature, strategic procurement function.

In areas with supplier shortages or other market challenges, a rigid, process-driven approach to procurement will not work. Instead, focus on the desired outcome. The new Act provides the flexibility to design a procurement process that is tailored to the specific needs of your organisation and the realities of the market.

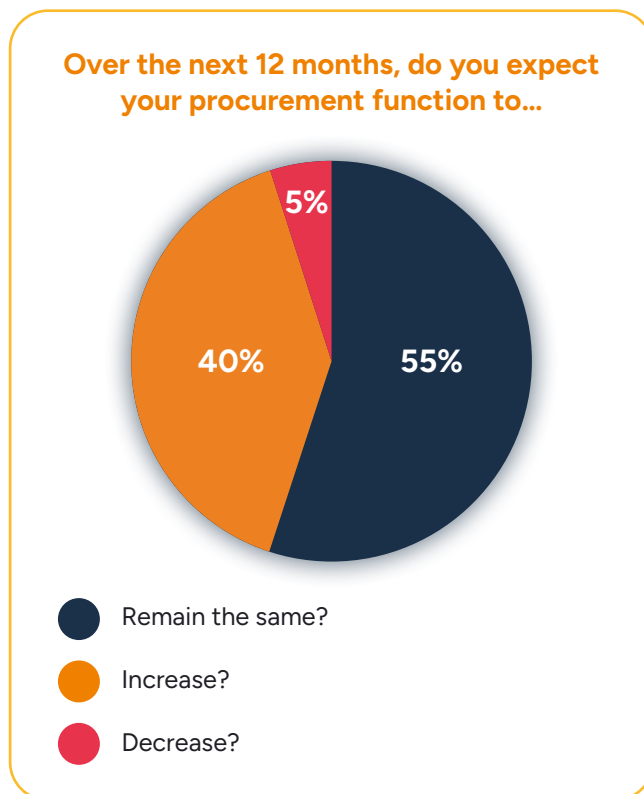
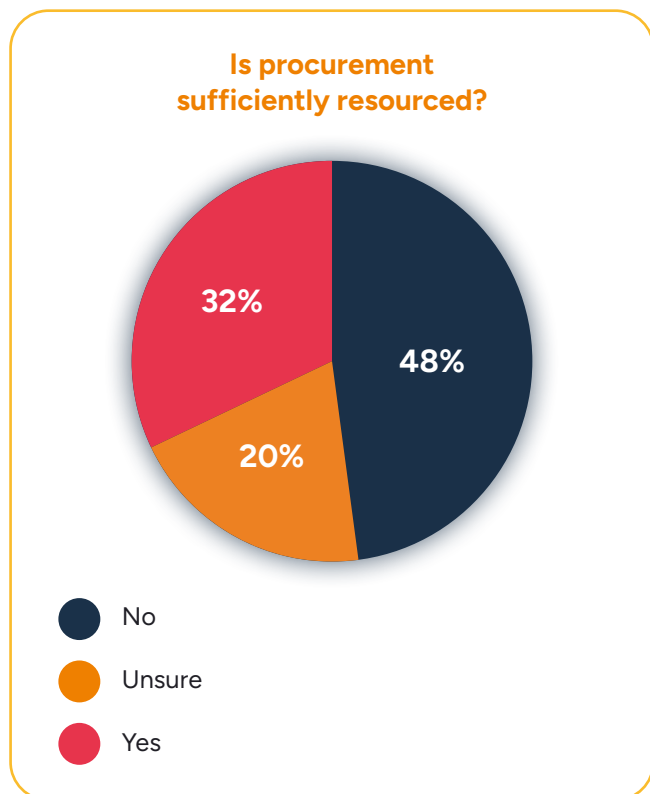
# Resourcing procurement

**The thorny issue of capacity still looms large in social housing procurement but there are positive signs of workforce investment**

What a difference a year makes. In 2025's Member Insight Report we pondered why procurement staffing levels had changed relatively little despite having to deal with major changes to public sector buying rules.

This time round, 35% of respondents said their team had expanded – marking a return to 2024 levels – while 57.5% remained the same and just 7.5% had contracted. Could we be seeing additional investment in staffing as the Procurement Act beds in and the task ahead becomes clearer?

While 48% say procurement is not sufficiently resourced, almost identical to last year's findings, and the survey detected greater uncertainty about current capacity, there's a sense of optimism for the future. Some 40% of respondents predict their team will grow over the next year, compared with 33% in 2025, and 55% expect staffing to remain the same.



### Challenges and opportunities

Resource and capacity constraints were the number one challenge cited by those who took part in this year's survey. Internal relationships were also highlighted. Comments included:

*"Capacity remains a large problem in the public sector."*

*"[There's] limited time to manage contracts or do market research."*

Greater investment in workforce was identified by respondents as an opportunity. Comments included:

*"Ensuring consistency – relevant staff need detailed training."*

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

While this year's survey findings indicate a positive trend of growth and investment in procurement teams, the picture is nuanced. The data serves as a useful benchmark for organisations to compare the size of their team against peers. However, it remains unclear whether the growth being reported is uniform across the sector, and the likelihood is smaller and medium-sized housing associations are lagging behind.

Ultimately, organisations must decide what they want their procurement function to be.

A transactional, compliance-focused team will keep you ticking along but if you want procurement to be a transformational, strategic asset then you have to invest in it.

It's encouraging that respondents cited strengthening contract management as one of the top priorities and opportunities for the next year.

Those who invest will reap the rewards in terms of benefits such as clearer spend visibility and stronger contract management, which in turn will deliver savings, drive efficiency and open the door to greater social value while supporting longer-term sustainability.

# Perceptions of procurement

**Shaking off the “compliance” tag is difficult – but there are signs of change**

Are perceptions of procurement finally beginning to shift? Well, just over eight out of 10 respondents said they believe procurement’s importance in the sector has increased, broadly the same as last year. This is encouraging because it means for a third year running, the vast majority feel procurement’s stock is rising.

But what is it valued for? According to our findings, the word senior leaders still primarily associate procurement with is “compliant” – just as they did in 2025 and 2024.

On the face of it, the sector is still struggling to shake off an image of procurement as a predominantly

transactional part of the organisation that keeps you on the straight and narrow.

However, there are signs the tide is turning. Hot on the heels of “compliant” were “important”, “strategic” and “value adding”. Descriptors such as “bureaucratic” and “reactive” appeared far less often.

It’s important to recognise that a focus on compliance is not a flaw, it’s a core responsibility of procurement. However, to evolve into a more strategic function, procurement must create “compliance by default” by making it effortless to achieve through robust, consistent processes and the right supporting tools.

## Top 5 words associated with procurement

**COMPLIANT** IMPORTANT  
STRATEGIC **VALUE ADDING**  
**PROFESSIONAL**



### Challenges and opportunities

Internal relationships, culture and communication came out as the fourth most cited challenge facing procurement teams. Comments included:

*"Need to reconsider the organisational understanding of 'procurement'."*

*"Biggest risk is poor communication slowing down procurement."*

However, improving internal collaboration and communication was seen as a key opportunity. Comments included:

*"[There's an] opportunity to increase flexibility and relevance of procurement."*

*"If we improve communication, we can secure more funding and deliver better outcomes."*

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

It's not surprising that procurement teams continue to be most associated with compliance given the advent of the Procurement Act and the changes it's ushered in. The immediate priority has defaulted back to ensuring compliance. This creates a tension between the aspiration to be strategic and the operational necessity of being a compliance-driven function.

But this year's findings also suggest growing recognition of procurement as a strategic, value-adding function and must be viewed as an opportunity to make a step change.

It's about shaking off the "computer says no" image once and for all by shifting from policing to problem solving. This means embracing a solution-finding mindset, improving communication and working collaboratively with internal stakeholders to find compliant and effective ways to achieve their objectives, rather than simply acting as a gatekeeper.

# Procurement spend visibility and savings

## Teams are developing a clearer view of expenditure, but are they looking in the right places?

The visibility of an organisation's spend is intrinsically linked to its ability to identify savings and manage risk. This year's survey revealed a mixed picture.

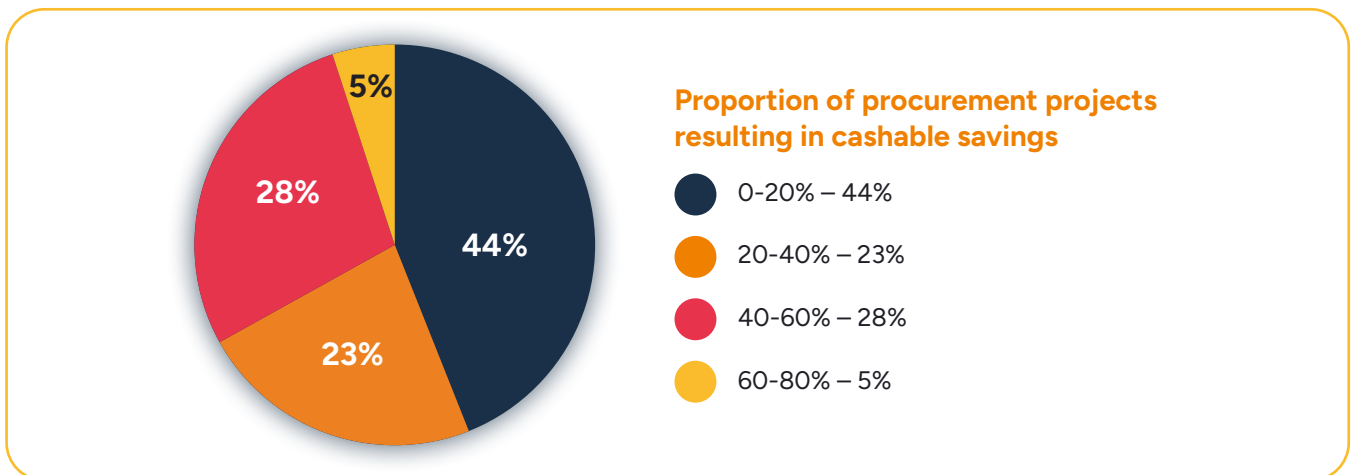
A third of respondents told us they have visibility over 80-100% of their expenditure – a slight improvement on last year. Meanwhile, 37% said they had oversight across 65-80% of spend, a fall from 40% in 2025.

When asked which categories currently lack visibility, clear themes emerged. ICT, legal and development/

construction were identified as weaknesses, echoing last year's findings. However, this time they were joined by financial services and repairs & maintenance.

Procurement teams continue to operate in a highly challenging and unpredictable economic climate. Despite this, many are still managing to generate direct savings across procurement projects. Some 44% of respondents said up to a fifth of their projects have achieved cashable savings. Overall, feedback shows most organisations fall into low to moderate savings bands.

## Top 5 spend visibility blind spots



### Challenges and opportunities

One of the top five challenges cited by survey respondents was dealing with cost pressures while securing savings and value for money. Comments included:

*"[We] need to deliver savings in a difficult market."*

*"Balancing cost down with reduced resources."*

*"Ensuring VfM remains difficult with fewer bids and higher prices."*

There's clear appetite to take a more strategic approach to procurement in order to support local SMEs – with driving local economic impact emerging as a key opportunity. Comments included:

*"Supporting local and regional economies as well as delivering on savings."*

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Feedback from this year's survey suggests an increasingly healthy level of spend visibility. But the key question is: how are people utilising this information?

Organisations that are applying robust spend analysis within their procurement function will be more able to extract insights that go to the very heart of driving efficiency.

It's not enough to simply identify and track suppliers who account for your largest areas of spend. A deeper dive is required to understand who the strategically important suppliers are. For example, an organisation may have a relatively low level of expenditure with an IT supplier but the quality and reliability of their service is likely to be critical to your operations and ability to meet customers' needs.

It's a pertinent point given we can see from the survey results that visibility is weaker across a number of those vital support areas.

Once again, it highlights the importance of investing in the development of procurement teams so they are better equipped to play a strategic role. Harnessing the power of spend analysis can unlock a range of benefits, from consolidating contracts to renegotiating with key suppliers. Technical knowledge and qualifications aren't enough – this is also about "soft skills" like communication, project management, commercial acumen and the ability to be a trusted business partner.

# Procurement priorities

## What's on the agenda for procurement teams moving forward?

As explored earlier in this year's Member Insight Report, dealing with capacity issues and adapting to the new legislation are key priorities at present.

The sector is going through a period of adjustment at a time of economic turmoil, uncertainty and greater regulation.

But there are also clear signs that procurement teams are eager to play a wider role in their organisations. All of the opportunities most frequently cited by our respondents can be categorised as strategic.

Among them is "leveraging AI and digital tools". The implications of AI, its potential and its likely impact on society are being discussed far and wide and so

it's no surprise to see it moving up the agenda in procurement circles.

The key is to leverage AI appropriately and treat it with a healthy degree of caution. By all means use it to help draft evaluation questions, but don't ask it to evaluate a tender response.

It can help you design a procurement process – but putting customer data in it is an absolute no-no.

AI cannot be a substitute for a procurement professional. Ultimately, procurement is about people, critical thinking, relationships and being that trusted business partner. After discussing the findings of this year's survey we put our thoughts into AI. It came out with these words of wisdom: use AI as a co-pilot, not an autopilot.

## Top 5 challenges

- 1 Capacity (staffing and expertise)
- 2 Complex new processes and PA23 compliance
- 3 Supplier shortages and low bigger engagement
- 4 Cost pressures, savings and value for money
- 5 Internal relationships, culture and communication

## Top 5 opportunities

- 1 Using new procurement to modernise processes
- 2 Strengthening contract management
- 3 Improving internal collaboration and communication
- 4 Leveraging AI and digital tools
- 5 Driving local economic impact



Value delivered

## How we can help

Procurement for Housing is a technology-enabled procurement partner for the social housing sector. We help organisations to manage their spend effectively, drive sustainable value, and improve operational efficiency.

We offer procurement consultancy, compliant solutions such as frameworks and Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS), Dynamic Markets (DM), and our spend and contract management platform, Quantum.

## Get in touch!



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