

Aberdeen City Council

PCIP Pulse Check Assessment Report 2024

Introduction

On 14th May 2024 Scotland Excel carried out a Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) Pulse Check assessment with Aberdeen City Council as part of the third round of such assessments of local authorities in Scotland.

This document sets out:

- The questions assessed and levels achieved.
- The key strengths and opportunities for development that the assessors identified from the PCIP
- Qualitative narrative that identifies positive changes in local practice.

Supporting you to improve

As the national centre of expertise for local government procurement, Scotland Excel is responsible for working with Scottish councils to improve procurement performance and practice. Working across the sector, and with individual councils, we can provide a range of support.



Workshops – covering a range of issues identified as key challenges across the sector, including input from experts and practitioners.



Accredited work based learning and development – delivered in person and online through the Scotland Excel Academy (academy.scotland-excel.org.uk)



Tailored change support – bespoke change support, delivered by our Project and Account Managers, to enable the change you need.

Overview of PCIP

Background

The Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) was introduced in 2015 and is a maturity model designed to assess Scottish public sector procurement performance in a common format.

The annual assessments set out to build foundations of good public sector procurement and to signpost good practice. The assessments were demonstrably at the heart of procurement improvements across Scotland.

The PCIP is a continuation of the work undertaken by the Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) carried out on an annual basis since 2008 until introduction of the PCIP.

PCIP Pulse Check commenced in 2023, with the offer of a new approach to further support the sector. The PCIP Pulse Check focuses on the policies and procedures driving procurement performance and, more importantly, the results they deliver. These pulse checks were undertaken with the assumption that the foundation elements identified and implemented since The McClelland report remain in place within organisations.

For PCIP Pulse Check, the assessment model developed offers a reduced question set and streamlined process for organisations whilst still assessing and supporting current procurement priorities. This hybrid model allows for greater flexibility and consists of a blended question set that can be tailored to the organisation and the sectoral context.

The model consists of eleven mandatory questions and nine discretionary questions.

Each question has four levels that an organisation may indicate it has achieved and will be assessed on the day. The levels are:

1. Developing Area
2. Improving Area
3. Good Practice
4. Advanced Practice

Further information on the PCIP can be obtained at the Scottish Government website:

<https://www.procurementjourney.scot/pcip/pcip-overview>

Overview of PCIP

PCIP Assessments 2023/2024

Scotland Excel worked with colleagues within Scottish Government and in conjunction with other public sector centres of expertise and our own Procurement Improvement Programme Steering Group, made up of local government procurement managers to consider the assessment route for 2023/24.

Of the thirty-two councils, twelve opted to not participate in this tranche of assessments. Irrespective of participation, all good practice and learning gathered as a result of the assessments will be shared with all members.

A number of councils volunteered to undertake pilot assessments. Output from these pilot sessions was shared with the wider community.

Prior to the commencement of assessments, Scotland Excel undertook a series of workshops across the sector to review typical evidence and to discuss each of the eleven mandatory questions as a group to achieve a common understanding.

The sector agreed to proceed with assessments on the understanding that council level results will not be shared beyond individual councils. Sector reporting, where possible, will be shared beyond individual councils.

Unlike previous PCIPs, there is no overall score that an organisation can compare with other organisations or sectors. Any comparisons will have to be undertaken based on the four levels indicated within this document.

One of the main benefits of sectoral assessment is the location and signposting of good practice. This will be a key aim of this assessment cycle.

A note on the assessment approach and judgments

Scotland Excel assessors have made the judgements and recommendations in this report based on evidence presented to them by your council, either in the form of documentation or verbal evidence.

PCIP is not an audit. Restraints on time and resources, coupled with a desire to ensure a proportionate approach to the assessments, means it is not possible for assessors to independently verify the evidence submitted as part of the assessment day. Instead, evidence is assessed in good faith with the onus on the council to be open and transparent.

Summary of overall performance

Overall performance

Aberdeen City Council undertook the PCIP assessment in May 2024. The table shows what level your organisation thought they would achieve for each question prior to the assessment and the levels that were achieved on the day.

Question	Level Council Requested	Level Council Achieved
1 – Procurement Influence	Advanced Practice	Advanced Practice
2 – Procurement Strategy	Advanced Practice	Advanced Practice
3 – Learning & Skills	Good Practice	Improving Area
4 – Risk Management	Good Practice	Good Practice
5 – Commercial Acumen	Advanced Practice	Advanced Practice
6 – Continuous Improvement	Good Practice	Good Practice
7 – Climate Change	Good Practice	Good Practice
8 – Implementation & Exit Strategies	Advanced Practice	Advanced Practice
9 – Contract & Supplier Management	Good Practice	Good Practice
10 – Contractual Obligations	Good Practice	Good Practice
11 – Lessons Learned	Good Practice	Advanced Practice

Aberdeen City Council v All Councils

Q1: Procurement influence

This question focuses on what level of influence the procurement function has over routine and major procurement activity and what the procurement function delivers to the organisation:

- Procurement professionals set all sourcing procedures.
- Procurement procedures and national policy are being adhered to.
- All influenceable spend has had procurement input helping to deliver sustainable and wider socio-economic outcomes.

Q2: Procurement Strategy

This question focuses on links between the organisation's procurement strategy and its corporate strategy. It also considers if the procurement strategy is delivering the sectors strategic objectives.

In particular it looks at:

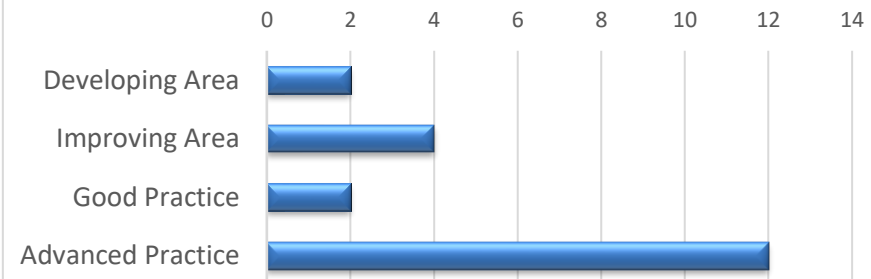
- Does the procurement function understand their sector environment.
- How procurement helps the organisation deliver its objectives, embedding wider national ambitions, such as climate.

Q1. Procurement Influence

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q1. Procurement Influence (Sector Results)

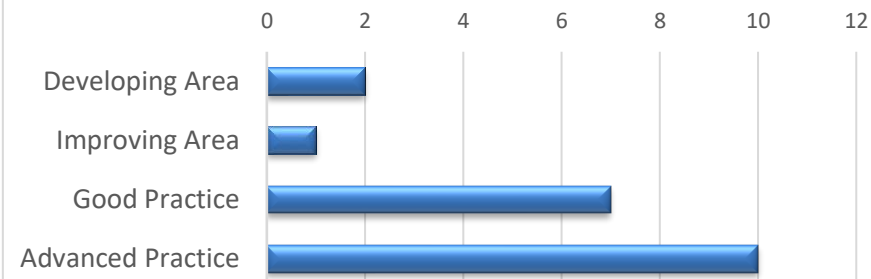


Q2. Procurement Strategy

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q2. Procurement Strategy (Sector Results)



Aberdeen City Council v All Councils

Q3: Learning & Skills

This question focuses on what the organisation does to develop existing procurement individuals and future talent:

- Development of existing professionals including undertaking a formal assessment of skills.
- Utilises a range of development methods including coaching and mentoring.
- Supports the development of future talent.
- Skills are recorded and tracked.

Q4: Risk Management

This question focuses on the organisation's approach to managing risk and contingency planning within procurement activity. In particular it looks at:

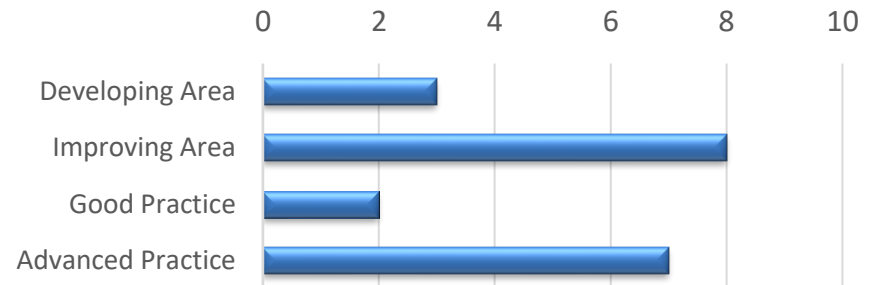
- The corporate level understands how procurement risks affect the organisation and manages them well.
- There is a clear understanding of why a Counter Fraud Strategy (CFS) is required, with controls in place.

Q3. Learning & Skills

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q3. Learning & Skills (Sector Results)

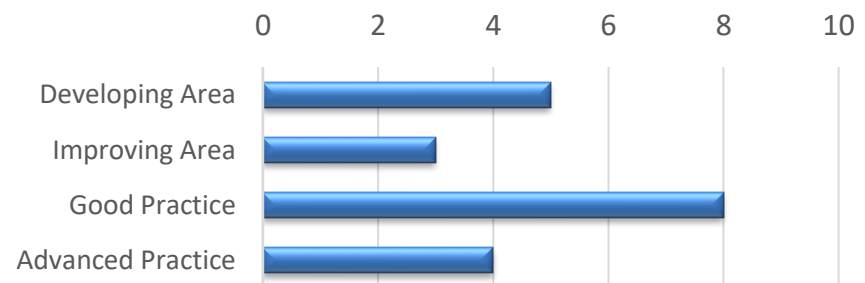


Q4. Risk Management

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q4. Risk Management (Sector Results)



Aberdeen City Council v All Councils

Q5: Commercial Awareness & Acumen

This question focuses on the organisation's approach to promote commercial competence and ensure it is embedded within its organisation and culture. In particular it looks at:

- Procurement focus on commercial acumen; judgement and negotiation skills.
- When making commercial decisions, there is clear evidence of data and information gathering to create an informed assessment of costs, benefits and risks to manage the commercial risk and exposure to customers.

Q6: Continuous Improvement of Procurement activity

This question focuses on the organisation's approach to drive continuous improvement in its procurement activity.

In particular it looks at:

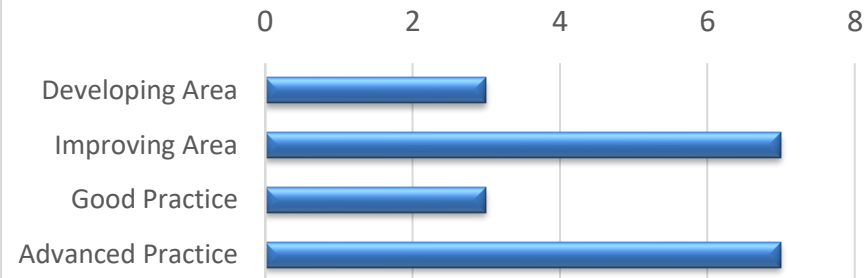
- How the organisation measures performance.
- Does the organisation seek to improve procurement activities, processes and procedures.

Q5. Commercial Acumen

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q5. Commercial Acumen (Sector Results)

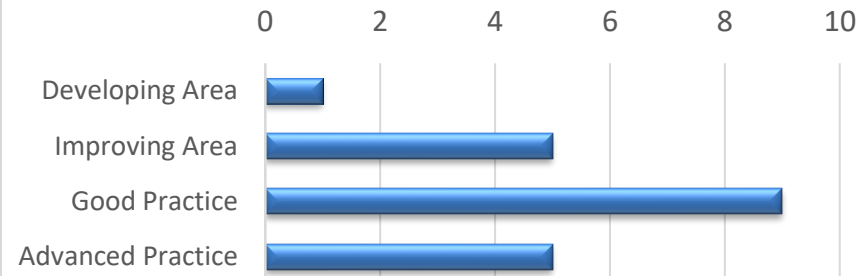


Q6. Continuous Improvement

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q6. Continuous Improvement (Sector Results)



Aberdeen City Council v All Councils

Q7: Climate Change

This question focuses on the organisation's approach to embedding climate and circular economy considerations into its corporate procurement strategy and delivery.

In particular it looks at:

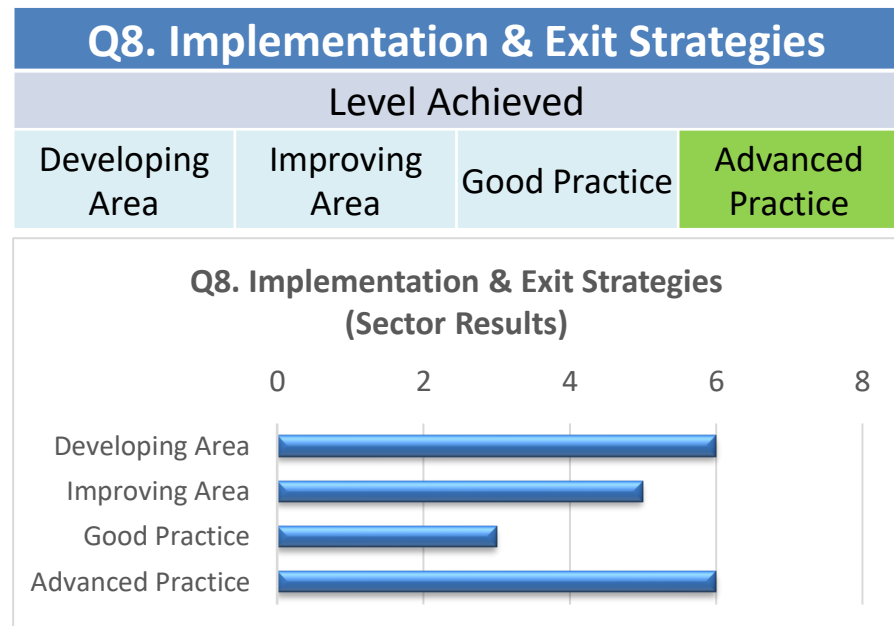
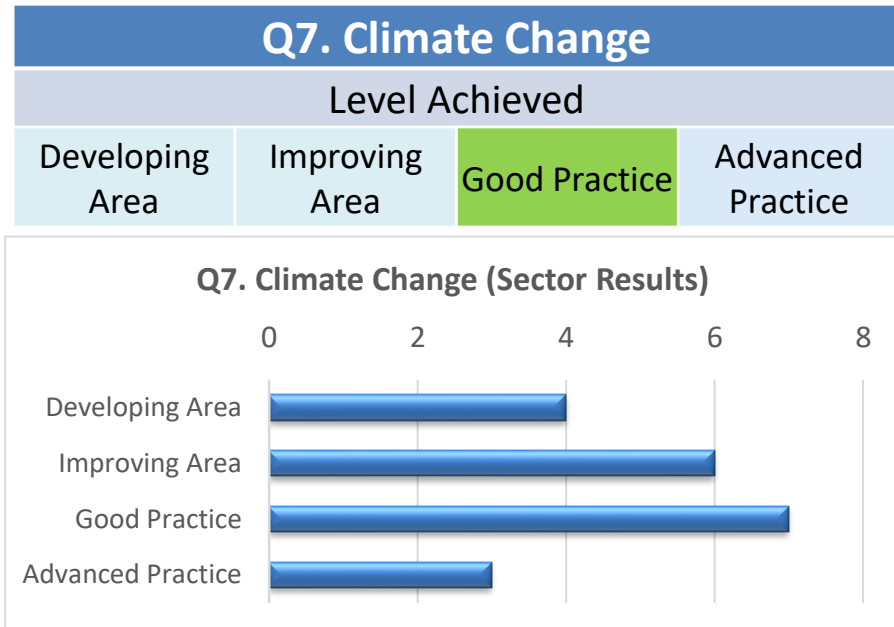
- Does senior management actively measure and recognise the positive environmental impact that procurement can make in a planned, organisational approach?
- Are progress and achievements included in the organisation's annual procurement reports?

Q8: Implementation & Exit Strategies

This question focuses on the how the organisation uses implementation plans and exit strategies efficiently.

In particular it looks at:

- how procurement will ensure new contracts will be successfully implemented and drive maximum benefits, timescales, uptake etc.
- Show consideration has been given to the end of an agreement - processes for implementation and exit plans.



Q9: Contract and Supplier Management

This question focuses on the organisation's approach to managing contracts and suppliers. In particular it looks at:

- The organisation has an understanding of who its key suppliers are, how suppliers should be managed and the benefits from contract and supplier management.
- CSM being used to drive compliance with Ts & Cs and delivery of targeted outcomes – i.e. prompt payment through the supply chain; climate etc.

Q10: Contractual Obligations

This question focuses on what the organisation does to work with suppliers throughout the life of a contract.

In particular it looks at:

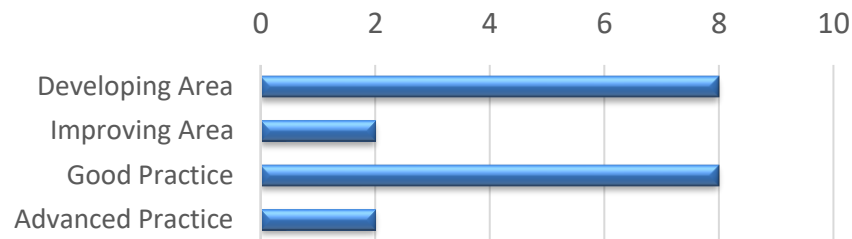
- Ensure suppliers are delivering what has been agreed and the process to ensure contractual obligations are met.
- How additional benefits are identified and delivered to both parties through continuous improvement and partnership models to drive additional value.

Q9. Contract & Supplier Management

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q9. Contract & Supplier Management (Sector Results)

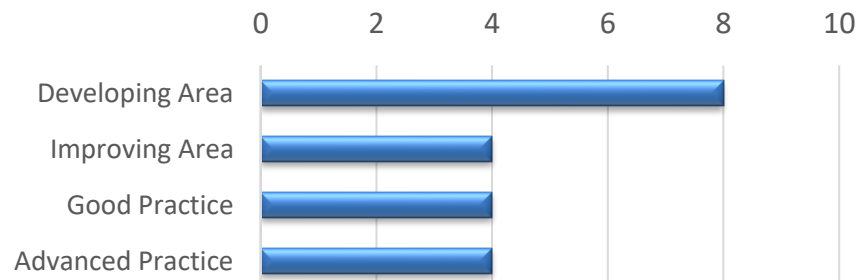


Q10. Contractual Obligations

Level Achieved

Developing Area	Improving Area	Good Practice	Advanced Practice
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Q10. Contractual Obligations (Sector Results)

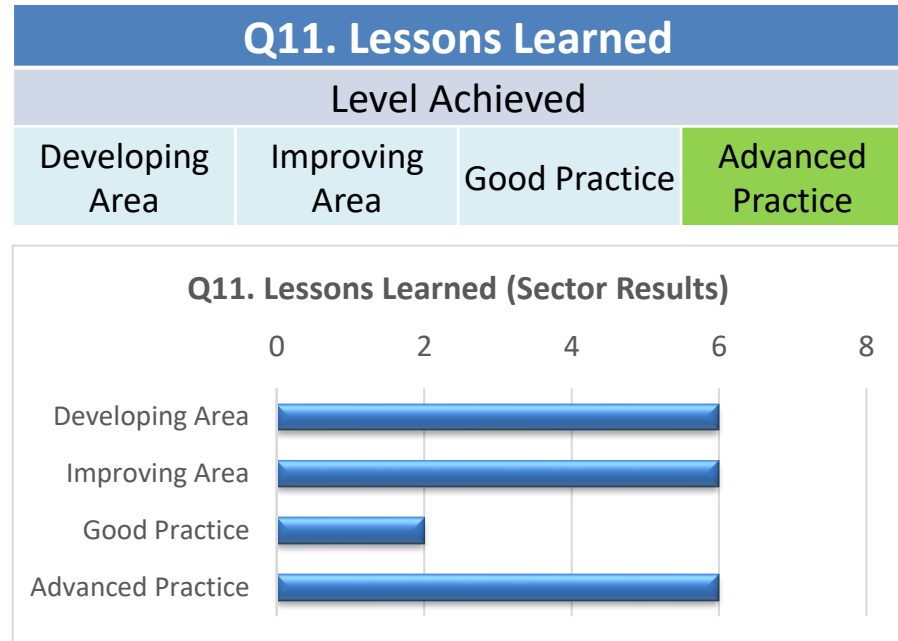


Q11: Lessons Learned

This question focuses on what benefits have been delivered through reviewing lessons learned from procurement exercises.

In particular it looks at:

- The process for reviewing, collating and distributing lessons learned as part of continuous improvement.
- That lessons learned have been applied and shared across similar organisations to maximise cross sectoral benefits.



Key areas of strength

The PCIP assessment identified the following key areas of strength based on the evidence provided. Please note it is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Ref	Description
S1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council has a very robust mechanism for strategic direction and reporting through the Strategic Procurement Board. This evidenced the highest level of senior management leadership and support.
S2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The team evidenced a number of service and process innovations across the organisation including the Hydrogen project, gain share methodology and exploring commercial opportunities for electrical vehicle charging.
S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The team lead on thematics relating to Climate Change/Net Zero across the council.
S4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council has a well-defined Delegated Procurement Officer (DPO) process and regime. This ensures procurement reach goes beyond the shared service in a structured way.
S5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council is a sector leader in its commercial practices. Commercial acumen is evident in the numerous examples evidenced during the assessment. The team has agreed to support best practice workshops to support wider sector development.
S6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social Care Commissioning demonstrated an approach to incorporating feedback from users of lived experiences in the support at home framework. This feedback allowed benchmarking across providers to target improvements.

Key opportunities for further improvement

The PCIP assessment also highlighted the following key opportunities for further improvement. Please note it is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Ref	Description
<i>11</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whilst the shared service has been recognised as having significant leadership and governance, it still has three separate council approval mechanisms. It may be beneficial to explore the possibility of simplification of this model
<i>12</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council should consider undertaking a structured assessment of individual Procurement Competency beyond the shared service and in particular any DPOs. This assessment would allow further training and development to be targeted to appropriate resources.
<i>13</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council explore the use of procurement based modern apprenticeships, work placements and graduate schemes to promote future talent. In developing this area external promotion should include but not be limited to schools, universities and colleges, job fairs, conferences, social media etc.
<i>14</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The council has developed its own climate literacy e-modules tailored to DPA levels. It is recommended that the councils eLearning is reviewed periodically against the latest Scottish Government climate literacy e-learning to ensure all aspects are covered and any updates are reflected.

Further information

Scotland Excel would like to thank you for completing the PCIP Pulse Check Assessment 2023/24. We appreciate your organisation's professionalism and are grateful for the preparation and hard work that was provided to support the assessment.

PCIP assessment information

Aberdeen City Council Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) Pulse Check assessment was carried out on 14th May 2024.

The assessment team were:

- Stephen Brannagan
- Peter Barnes

What's next

It is proposed that all organisations will undertake a fourth assessment within two to three years. Scotland Excel will be in touch in due course.

In the meantime, Scotland Excel will work with councils to share and discuss examples of best practices by facilitating workshops sessions during August 2024. This will also be supported via the PiP Steering group.

Scotland Excel will continue to work across the sector, and with individual councils to provide a range of support. If you need help with any of the identified opportunities for improvement, please contact us.

Further information on PCIP

You can find out more about PCIP on the Procurement Journey website here:

<https://www.procurementjourney.scot/pcip/pcip-overview>

Contact details

For support and further information, please contact your account manager:

Your account manager: Peter Barnes
Email: Peter.Barnes@scotland-excel.org.uk

Further information about Scotland Excel

To find out more about Scotland Excel, please visit our website:

www.scotland-excel.org.uk

