Liberatus can help companies meet the requirements of the Government's new procurement policy

The Cabinet Office published its detailed guidance for Procurement Policy Note 026 (PPN026) on 28 October 2026[1] and the new Social Value Model takes effect on 1 January 2027[2].

The policy and model applies to central government departments, their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies. Other public sector contracting authorities can choose to adopt the approach.

PPN026 fundamentally changes the way social value is assessed in central government procurement focusing on two principal outcomes: **Good Jobs and Skills**.

The importance of this change for companies bidding for central government contracts cannot be overstated. From discussions with Social Value Managers and Bid Managers over recent weeks, it is clear that many organisations are already reviewing their bidding strategies and reassessing how they will demonstrate and measure social value.

What does PPN026 mean for government contractors?

Contracts are designated into three contract value bands, with increasing minimum social value weightings:

Total contract value (including VAT)	Minimum social value weighting
Below £1m	No mandatory PPN026 weighting
£1m to below £5m	10%
£5m or more	20%

For contracts valued at £5m or more, at least one social value KPI must be established, with performance published at least annually through a contract performance notice.

Additionally, central government departments must report social value KPI performance to the Cabinet Office quarterly where the standard reporting metrics have been used.

Under PPN026, the risk for bidders has moved from making promises to demonstrating delivery. Though other social value considerations, including carbon emissions, environmental objectives and modern slavery, have not disappeared from public procurement, Annex E of PPN026 makes clear that these considerations must sit

[1] *Cabinet Office publication page: PPN 026, The Social Value Model*.
[2] *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-guidance-documents-plan-phase/guidance-covered-procurement-definition-html*

outside the new Social Value Model and, where included, must be allocated their own separate weighting. They cannot be used to satisfy or contribute towards the minimum 10% or 20% weighting required for Good Jobs and Skills.

The message for contractors is clear: social value is no longer simply about having a corporate responsibility policy or supporting charitable initiatives. Companies will need to demonstrate measurable employment and skills outcomes and deliver on the commitments made in their bids.

The 8 Target Cohorts

PPN026 identifies 8 Target Cohorts whose employment, skills development and progression can contribute to the delivery of the new Social Value Model:

1. People not in employment, education or training (NEETs), aged 16–24.
2. People transitioning from education to employment, having left education or training within the previous 12 months.
3. People with a long-term health condition or disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
4. People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or neurodiversity.
5. Care leavers aged 16–24 who meet the specified eligibility criteria.
6. People on probation, including those serving community sentences and prison leavers, and people in prison where support is aimed at reducing reoffending.
7. Victims of domestic abuse.
8. Veterans.

Turning PPN026 into a competitive advantage

The 6th Target Cohort is particularly relevant to Liberatus and presents a significant opportunity for companies bidding for government contracts.

Liberatus works directly with prisons, probation services, job centres and charities to identify and recruit people who have left prison, are on probation or are serving community sentences, helping employers access a workforce that is often overlooked, but which has considerable skills, experience and potential.

Liberatus started in late 2025. Over this year its candidate pool has grown rapidly. Of approximately 900 candidates referred to date, 500 have been accepted following initial assessment and risk assessment process. These candidates are available for work, and this number continues to grow.

Work-ready candidates bring a broad range of qualifications, certifications and practical experience. For example:

Construction and Trades

- 135 have valid CSCS cards
- 125 are skilled trades people - electricians, plumbers, carpenters, roofers etc
- 47 have at least one forklift driving certification

Support Services

- Over 50 have cleaning and maintenance experience

Professional and Office-Based Roles

- 175 have office-based experience – Bookkeeping, Legal, marketing, sales, HR, business analysis, administration, education, logistics, IT and more

Figures represent experience and skills across our candidate pool; categories may overlap.

These are people with convictions who are actively looking for work and are ready to make a positive contribution to an employer. Subject to role requirements and any additional client-specific checks, Liberatus can typically identify suitable candidates for permanent and agency positions within a few days.

Liberatus undertakes initial candidate assessment, risk assessment and compliance checks, helping employers access a workforce that is ready to work while providing supporting evidence to demonstrate their social value commitments.

The opportunity goes beyond creating new jobs

There is another important aspect of the new guidance that companies should understand.

Annex A of the accompanying guidance recognises that, in appropriate circumstances, the employment of existing members of a Target Cohort can contribute to social value outcomes where those individuals are deployed to deliver a contract.

This means the opportunity is not necessarily limited to creating new jobs.

Companies that already employ people with convictions, or work with organisations such as Liberatus to recruit them, may be able to demonstrate existing employment outcomes when bidding for new government contracts, subject to the contracting authority's published evaluation methodology.

For contractors, this creates an opportunity to build a longer-term employment strategy that supports both their commercial objectives and their social value commitments.

Why this matters

The ethos behind Liberatus is simple: helping people with convictions secure good jobs benefits the individual, their families, employers and society as a whole.

Sustainable employment is widely recognised as one of the most important factors in reducing reoffending. Tempus Novo, an organisation specialising in employment for former prisoners, reported a reoffending rate of just 3.6% among those supported through its programme[3].

The Government has now made Good Jobs and Skills central to its approach to social value in procurement, specifically recognising people on probation and prison leavers as a Target Cohort.

Liberatus can help companies turn that policy into practical results.

Whether a company is preparing a bid for a new central government contract, reviewing its existing social value strategy or looking to develop a longer-term employment partnership, Liberatus can help you access a growing pool of work-ready candidates and build measurable employment outcomes into your business.

[3] *"work continues to prove itself as the best route out of crime, with just 3.6% reoffending, a rate once again under 5 per cent" see Tempus Novo 2024 Annual Report Page 3.*