



**Written submission to the Scottish Parliament
Public Service Reform Committee
Ahead of evidence session – 8 October 2026**



Scotland Excel: Delivering public service reform through collaboration

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1. Scotland Excel: reform in practice

Scotland Excel is a shared service, established in 2008 following the recommendations of the McClelland Review of Public Procurement (2006). The McClelland report called for a ‘once for Scotland’ approach to procurement, using Centres of Expertise to drive collaboration, build professional capacity and avoid duplication across the public sector.

Scotland Excel has spent almost two decades delivering this in practice, demonstrating how public bodies can work differently to deliver professional procurement expertise, efficiencies, better value and improved outcomes while maintaining local accountability.

As Scotland’s centre of procurement expertise for the local government sector, Scotland Excel brings councils together to collaborate on procurement, commissioning, savings and skills development through the legal structure of a joint committee, established by the 32 Scottish local authorities under Section 57 of the Local Government Scotland Act (1973).

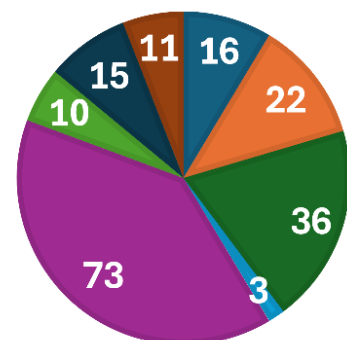
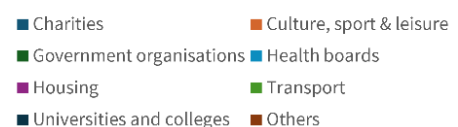
All 32 Scottish councils are members, alongside 186 associate members.

The organisation currently has 63 collaborative frameworks in place, across social care, construction, education, waste and recycling, facilities management, roads and transport and digital.

The model is based around combining national scale with local accountability. Councils retain responsibility for their own services and spending decisions, while accessing shared procurement expertise, aggregated demand, established supplier relationships, market intelligence and common supply chain solutions.

The result is a ‘Once for Scotland’ shared resource that means councils jointly benefit from a single point of delivery, reducing the resources they are each required to commit in order to meet their needs.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



This approach has delivered measurable financial benefits alongside wider economic, social and community outcomes.

2. Delivering measurable financial value

A direct measure of the success of Scotland Excel's collaborative model is the financial value delivered to the sector. This includes £200m in direct price-based savings and £112m in collaborative savings.

The organisation's National Savings Programme is now in its third year and provides a further example of the value of bringing commercial, procurement and analytical expertise together at a national level.

So far, the programme has:

- Reviewed £720 million of local government expenditure.
- Presented £18 million of savings and aggregation opportunities to councils.

Scotland Excel's Flexible Procurement Team - which provides specialist capacity to councils and associate members- has delivered procurement projects worth more than £100 million through its service.

These examples demonstrate the practical financial benefits that can be realised when public bodies aggregate demand, share expertise and reduce duplication.

3. Community Wealth Building - Delivering wider economic and social value

The value of collaboration extends beyond the price paid for goods and services.

Procurement and Commissioning are major players in driving Community Wealth Building. Local Government and Scotland Excel have been delivering against these aims for twenty years.

Scotland Excel's frameworks provide a practical mechanism through which local authorities can deliver their own strategic objectives while contributing to wider public sector priorities and national policy ambitions.

The portfolio of contracts supports a range of national outcomes, including investment in housing and infrastructure, community wealth building, net zero ambitions, fair work, skills and employment opportunities, and sustainable public services. By embedding policy requirements and good practice into collaborative procurement arrangements, Scotland Excel helps ensure that national priorities can be translated into tangible local benefits for communities across Scotland.

Through this approach, collaborative procurement acts as both an efficiency measure and a reform tool, enabling local government to achieve better outcomes collectively than could be delivered through individual procurements alone.

Collaborative procurement can also help shift public spending towards prevention by connecting purchasing decisions more clearly to long-term outcomes. Scotland Excel's food frameworks support breakfast clubs, free and paid school meals and holiday provision, helping councils improve access to nutritious food and reduce the impact of hunger on children's experience of school and educational attainment. In housing, coordinated procurement can support access to affordable homes and help ensure that children grow up in stable, warm and safe environments, with potentially transformational

Use of Scotland Excel frameworks has delivered councils financial benefits of...

**£200 million
in direct price-based
savings.**

**£112 million
in collaborative savings.**

**£8.5 million
delivered through rebates
since 2019.**



benefits for future health, wellbeing and opportunity. The investment and national focus associated with the More Homes agenda provide an opportunity to develop shared procurement solutions, remove barriers to delivery and avoid duplicated effort across common markets. Similarly, programmes supporting energy efficiency and net zero can help reduce fuel poverty as well as emissions.

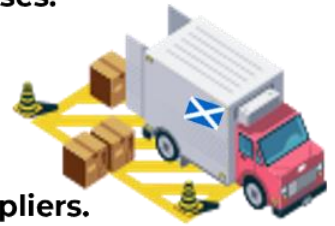
The framework supplier base comprises 1,227 suppliers, of which 828 are based in Scotland. Some 86% of Scotland Excel's Scottish suppliers are small and medium enterprises (SMEs), while nine in ten suppliers pay the Real Living Wage (RLW).

Spend over the last 4 quarters.

**£562 million
with Scottish businesses.**

**£388 million
with Scottish SMEs.**

**£706 million
with RLW paying suppliers.**

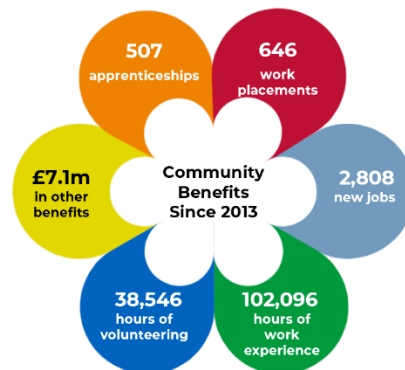


This demonstrates that aggregation of public-sector demand can maintain opportunities for smaller or local businesses. Procurement can be designed to use the purchasing power of the public sector while supporting wider economic objectives.

Wider impact is an important part of the shared-service model. Scotland Excel works to ensure that public resources are used in ways that maximise the value generated for communities

Community benefits generated through Scotland Excel arrangements since 2013 include:

**Spend through frameworks delivers benefits
for local communities.**



4. Building shared capacity and expertise

Effective collaboration can enable access to specialist knowledge and capacity without each organisation having to develop and maintain the same resource independently. This is particularly relevant as the public sector faces increasing financial and workforce pressures and increasingly complex procurement and commissioning requirements.

Scotland Excel provides specialist procurement and commissioning expertise, consultancy, market knowledge, contract management support and learning and development.

The Scotland Excel Academy has supported more than 6,400 learners through high-quality learning and development programmes, helping to build procurement, commissioning and commercial capability across the public sector.

The incoming Procurement Bill will require coordinated implementation across the public sector. Scotland Excel can use its collective capacity, networks and expertise to help public bodies embed the changes consistently through shared guidance, tools and learning, reducing duplication and pressure on local resources.

Scotland Excel's Academy supports the development of skills across the public sector.



Scotland Excel's work in social care enables councils and Integration Joint Boards to collaborate nationally on the commissioning, procurement and contract management of social care services. Through compliant, collaboratively procured routes to market, shared expertise and sector engagement, this approach reduces duplication, supports greater consistency and allows scarce resources to be focused on frontline services.

Scotland Excel's approach supports commercial transparency and market sustainability strengthening the resilience of social care provision and promoting efficient, person-centred services that improve outcomes for communities across Scotland.

5. Collaboration can support local decisions

The Scotland Excel model is based on collaboration between individual public bodies in a way that embraces local decision making.

There are functions where national or regional consistency can create substantial benefits. There are others where local knowledge, circumstances and democratic accountability remain essential. A successful collaborative model embraces local and regional requirements while identifying:

- Where demand can be aggregated
- Where expertise can be shared
- Where duplication can be reduced.
- Where common standards or approaches add value.
- Where local flexibility remains important.

By undertaking suitable activity once, successful collaboration also frees up local capacity, enabling councils to focus their limited resources and expertise on local priorities, service delivery and areas where local knowledge adds the greatest value.

Scotland Excel provides an established example of this approach operating at scale.

6. Looking ahead

While Scotland Excel's collaborative model has delivered significant benefits, a number of challenges remain that are reflective of wider pressures across Scotland's public sector.

Public services face increasing demand, constrained budgets, workforce shortages and rising complexity in areas such as social care, housing, infrastructure and climate change. At the same time, public expectations continue to grow. These pressures create a need for organisations to work together more effectively but can also limit the capacity available to invest in change and transformation.



Collaborative approaches often require organisations to balance local priorities with collective objectives. While there is broad recognition of the benefits of collaboration, achieving consistency across multiple organisations with differing local circumstances has been challenging for Scotland Excel and has limited uptake in some collaborative work.

Scotland Excel's experience, however, demonstrates that measurable benefits can be achieved by sharing functions, expertise and infrastructure across organisational boundaries.

Going forward, there are opportunities to build on this experience and the existing collaborative infrastructure and approaches.

For example, Scotland Excel has identified potential opportunities for greater collaboration in areas including food procurement, construction materials and education materials. These areas involve significant public expenditure and could benefit from greater aggregation of demand.

There are also opportunities to develop more collaborative approaches to social care commissioning, combining local support with common tools, training, cost modelling, better data & market intelligence and national or regional solutions where appropriate.

Get in touch

Contact us to find out more about our services
and how we can help your organisation:

Phone: 0141 488 8230

Email: contactus@scotland-excel.org.uk

www.scotland-excel.org.uk



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