**Purchasing and Paying during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Introduction**

In preparation for any potential impact to teams responsible for raising orders, we have set up a central team to support cost centres (both in prisons and probation) when they are unable to raise orders locally. The team will also support the agency when invoices need to be released for payment to support prompt payment to suppliers.

In addition, there will be increased central oversight of advance payments to suppliers and emergency payments, including same day payment requests. This will assist us in managing the department’s cash-flow while ensuring appropriate controls are in place for these payments.

**If you are contacted by a supplier requesting emergency payment, do not give any assurances but contact** COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk **immediately. We will then advise you on the steps to take.**

**What to do if you need to buy:**

* **Government Procurement Card (GPC)**

GPC should continue to be used for low value, ad-hoc purchases where no contract exists. In addition, GPC may also be used as per the latest guidance (see Annex A below).

* **Use of I-procurement**

If you have a requisitioner **and** a requisition approver available within your cost centre, then continue to place orders as usual via I-procurement.

However please note that some suppliers are not taking orders at this time, so please refer to the [procurement bulletins page](https://hmpps.myhub.sscl.com/i-need-to-manage/finance-and-procurement/purchase-to-pay/procurement-bulletins) on myHub before raising an order. If **either** a requisitioner or a requisition approver is unavailable, then **do not** raise the order locally, instead complete a Purchase Request Form (PRF) available on [myHub PRF page](https://moj.myhub.sscl.com/fast-forms/finance-forms/laa-finance-forms) and submit to COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk following these essential steps:

1. Ensure the supplier and the goods or services required are clearly defined, including the quantity, pack size, etc.
2. Confirm whether, if the order is over £10k, you are content for the invoice to be paid once it is submitted
3. The budget holder must then submit the PRF to COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk

If there is no budget holder available:

1. The requester may submit the PRF to the functional mailbox **but** the budget holder or the regular approver on SOP must be copied into the email.

In this circumstance we will process the PRF but will require post event checks to be made to retrospectively confirm budget holder approval.

Failure to follow these steps will result in the PRF being rejected and will delay the order being placed.

We will work hard to process all purchase requests and queries promptly, but in periods of high demand delays may be experienced.

**Manual Payments:**

* **SOP 1**

The continued use of SOP1 manual payments is permitted, however, these should only be used in line with existing rules. SOP1 may be used when no other payment route is available (iProcurement, GPC or I-Expenses) and the supplier does not provide an invoice.

SOP1 forms should not be used to bypass or accelerate the procurement process.

* **SOP 6**

Although the use of SOP 6 payments may continue, these need to be carefully managed to protect the department’s cash flow and control the use of emergency and advance payments. To achieve this, the number of approvers for SOP 6 forms has been reduced with all SOP 6 payment requests going through a daily triage process. It is therefore important that you follow the **new process in Annex B** (below). Failure to follow this process will lead to your payment request being rejected.

Due to the time taken to process a SOP6, all requests for same day payment will need to be submitted to COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk **no later than 10.00am** each day.

**Additional support**

Where required, the central team will take action to release invoice holds, in some cases this will happen without further reference to the cost centre. If you are aware of any invoices that should not be paid, please ensure the “SOP Dispute” invoice hold is attached to the invoice in SOP.

All invoices released by the central team will be flagged as such and a record of these provided to cost centres periodically, this will provide visibility to support post payment checks.

**Queries in relation to this notice should be addressed to** COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk

**Annex A**

**Covid-19 – Purchases via Government Procurement Card**

The following has been agreed to support MoJ in purchasing of goods and services during the Covid-19 situation. Business units should adhere to the business as usual acquisition model and note that finance are introducing measures to support this process.

All merchant categories apart from cash have been unblocked. Financial limits have been increased to £10k per transaction with a monthly limit of £50k.

This has been implemented to ensure there is no detriment to the running of prisons and probation services but please be aware of the following:

* The GPC should only be used when there are no staff to raise a requisition or the goods are needed by the next day
* **GPC must not be used for goods and services where there is a contract in place** unless it is an emergency.
* GPC must not be used for PPE purchases, this is because there is a risk that products may not be to the required specification; these are being procured and issued centrally. Please contact the Business Hub for any queries relating to PPE (HMPPS) or order via the Banner Stationery Contract (HMCTS/MOJ/ALBs/NPS).
* Budget Holder approval is still required, if the budget holder is not available due to self-isolation or sickness, SMT approval is sufficient as long as the budget holder is copied into any correspondence regarding purchases.
* Transaction logs must still be fully completed including the full account code
* Backing documentation must be attached to the transaction logs
* I-Expenses must be allocated by the cardholder and cleared by the line manager
* The actual items purchased must be recorded on SOP when allocating the transaction on I-Expenses
* Transaction log checks must be completed as soon as resource allows it
* Invoices must not be paid via GPC
* To ensure our records are completely up to date, if contact details have changed since receiving a GPC, please submit a GPC Change of Information Form to SSCL via moj-procurement-gpc@gov.sscl.com

If there are any queries, please contact CommercialGPC@Justice.gov.uk

**Annex B**

**SOP 6 manual payment process**

Ensure you download the latest version of the SOP 6 from [myHub manual payment forms](https://hmpps.myhub.sscl.com/fast-forms/manual-payments-and-supplier-maintenance).

Save the form to a local drive or your desktop and open the form from this location. This ensures the macros are enabled and the form may be completed correctly.

Complete the form as up to the point where you would select the approver, but **do not select an approver**. Instead save the form at this point.

When completing the form, please ensure that:

* The supplier name matches the invoice or other supporting documents
* The bank details are correct and that you include documentation to verify the bank account details
* The Unique Payment Reference is unique and if there is an invoice, then use the invoice number (do not use the name of the supplier or a purchase order number)
* If the SOP6 is for an invoice and this is already on SOP, the payment will be rejected. Please take action to pay the invoice within SOP
* You select the correct cost centre and account code for the payment
* You include the budget holder’s approval to make the payment

When submitting the form please send it as an email attachment to the central team at COVID19EmergencyPOteam@justice.gov.uk and ensure the subject field of the email reads: *Official- SOP6 Payment Request-* followed by the unique payment reference.

Finally, within the body of the email, please provide sufficient supporting detail to justify the same day payment request:

* What are the consequences of not paying today?
* How long has the supplier been waiting for the payment?
* What steps have you taken to make payment through other routes?

Please note that payments to Government Legal Department will continue to be made, though daily restrictions may be applied.

All other payments will be prioritised depending upon the circumstances and although we will attempt to accommodate all reasonable requests for same day payment, we cannot guarantee that all will be made.