



Getting the most from Contracts Finder

A guide for businesses and the public

May 2012

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What's this guide for?

This guide explains how you can use Contracts Finder to search for:

- live and potential opportunities from UK central government departments, their agencies and other parts of the public sector, as well as sub-contracting opportunities with prime contractors
- published tender and contract documents, ie details of contracts that have already been awarded - so you can see what government has bought and is buying

The guide explains how to use the search facility to find the contracts you're interested in and takes you step-by-step through setting up email alerts. It also describes how to add your business to the Supplier Directory, so buyers can notify you directly about potential opportunities.

What's on Contracts Finder

If you're looking to work with government, Contracts Finder has details of the following **live opportunities**:

- Lower-value opportunities – ie contracts for works, supplies and services worth more than £10,000.
- Higher-value opportunities taken from the Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) website – these are typically worth more than £100,000.
- Sub-contracting opportunities - ie contracts for works, supplies and services from prime contractors who have won public sector contracts.

You can now also find details of pipeline notices. These describe **potential opportunities** that might be offered by public sector organisations in the next few years. Pipeline notices can help your business plan ahead, giving you time to bring in additional capacity or form partnerships that can make you better placed to compete for any contracts that are offered.

Contracts Finder also has details of all **closed** government opportunities - where the tendering process has finished – that have been published since October 2010. These relate to all government procurements worth more than £10,000 and include:

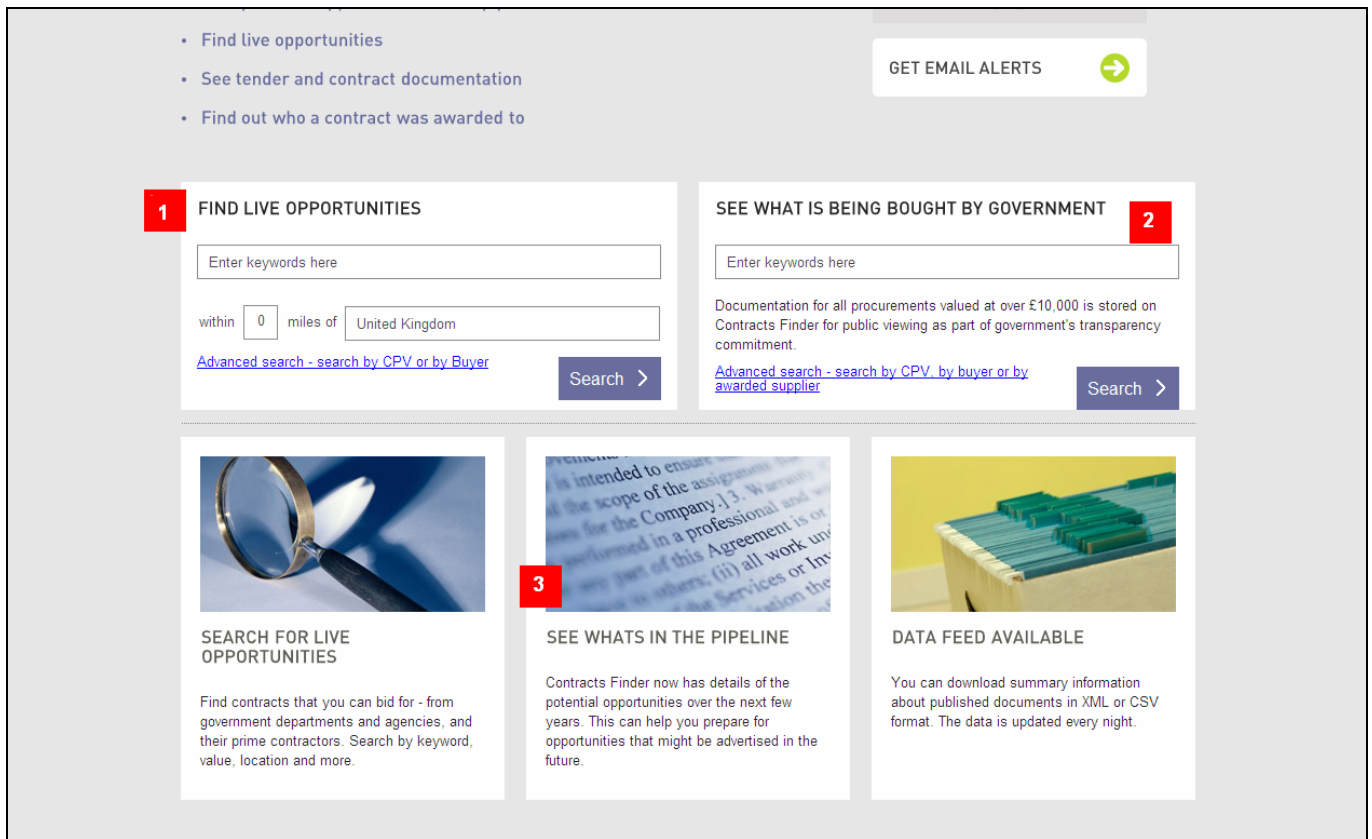
- tender notices and documents – such as advertisements and pre-qualification questionnaires
- contract documents and award notices – the agreements between the buying organisation and the suppliers (note that confidential or commercially sensitive information is removed before publication)

Searching for notices – the basics

The quickest way to search Contracts Finder is to use one of the two search boxes on the welcome page:

1. **'Find live opportunities' (1)** – this option searches for live (open) tenders only, and excludes all notices relating to procurements that have already been completed.
2. **'See what is being bought by government' (2)** – you can search for tender and contract documents for completed procurements that government has published as part of its transparency commitment. This search does not show you live opportunities.

Figure 1: Main search options on the Contracts Finder welcome page



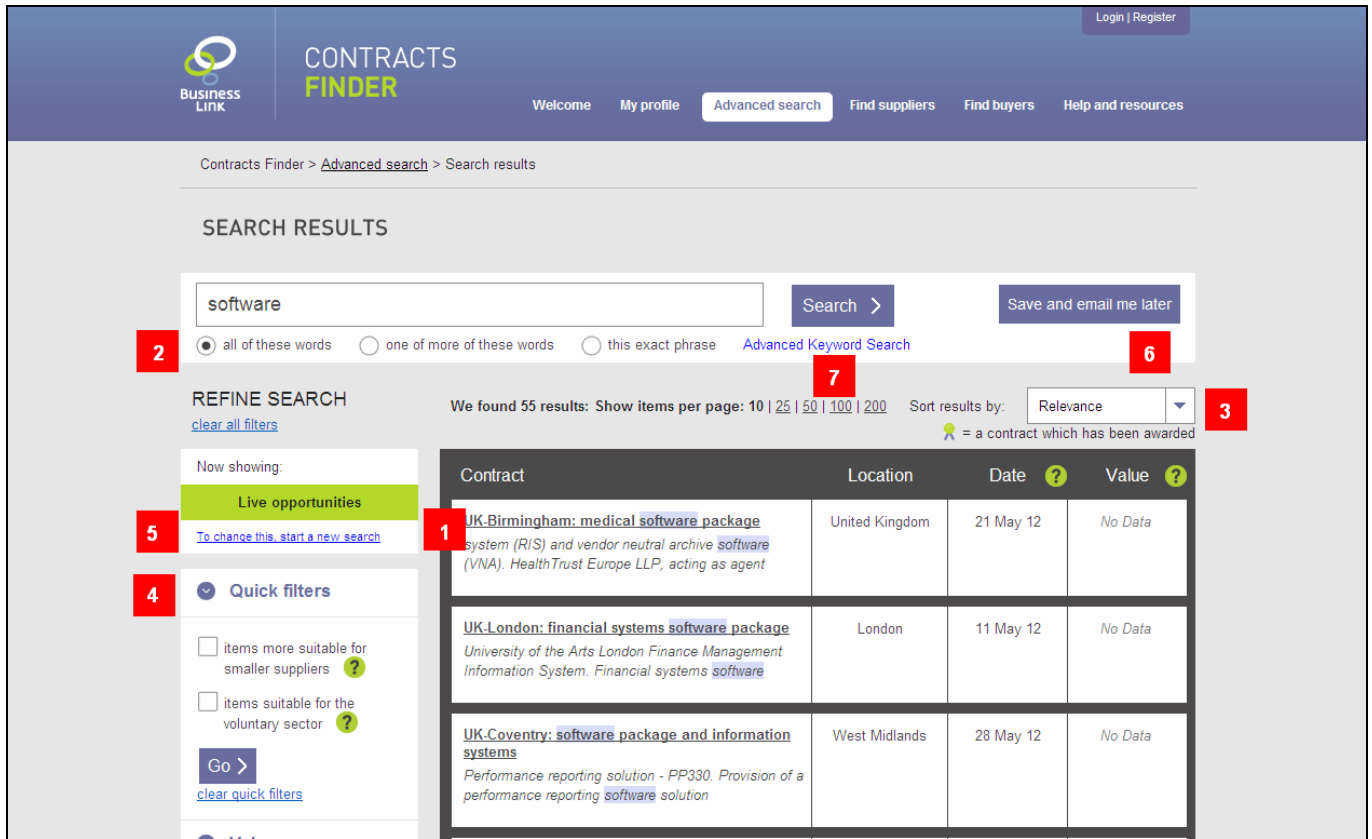
You can also find **potential opportunities** that might be offered in the next few years by clicking on the ‘See what’s in the pipeline’ link (3). Public sector organisations publish these ‘pipeline notices’ to give suppliers advance information about possible future contracts, so that they can plan ahead accordingly.

Find live opportunities

This option lets you search for all notices on Contracts Finder that relate to live opportunities. That includes tentative notices – where a government buyer is inviting expressions of interest before publishing a contract notice – as well as actual tenders that you can bid for.

To start a search, type some keywords in the ‘Find live opportunities’ search box. You can specify a location if you want. Click ‘Search’ and you are taken to the ‘Search results’ page showing all contracts currently open for bidding that meet your criteria.

Figure 2: Live opportunities search results page



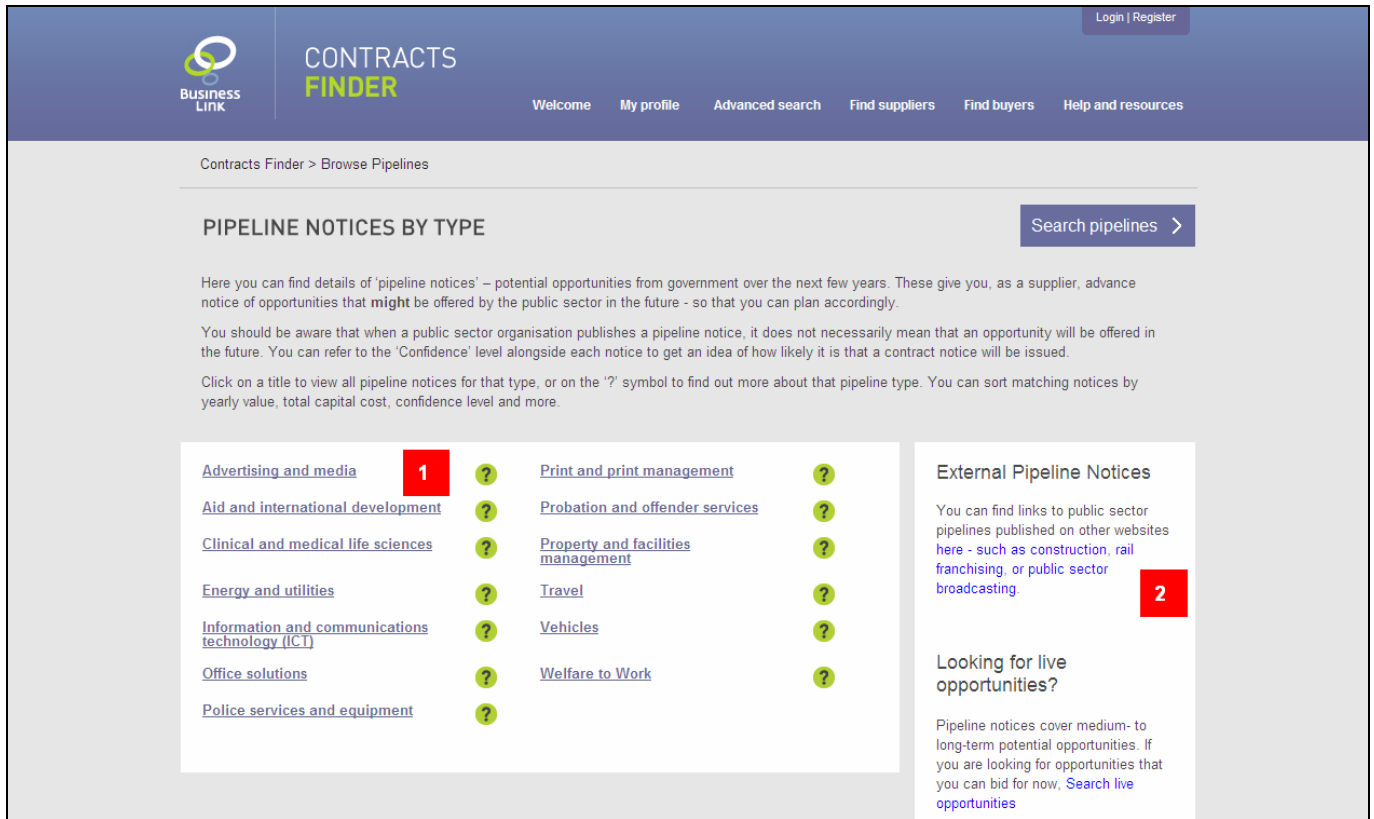
From this page you can:

- find out more about any of the notices shown, by clicking on a title (1)
- narrow down or expand your search by clicking on the ‘all of these words’, ‘one of more of these words’ or ‘this exact phrase’ buttons (2) – or by running the search again with different keywords
- sort the results (3) for easier reference – you can do this by relevance, publication date, deadline date, or value
- use quick filters (4) to fine-tune your results, for example by specifying a minimum value or limiting your search to a particular part of the UK
- change your search to include closed opportunities instead (5), or to include both live and closed opportunities
- create a saved search (6), so that you can set up email alerts
- run an advanced keyword search (7). This gives you more control over what words Contracts Finder should search for – eg you can run searches that exclude specific words

View pipeline notices

To search for pipeline notices, click on the ‘See what’s in the pipeline’ link on the Contracts Finder welcome page. This takes you to a page from which you can select a pipeline type, eg ICT or housing services.

Figure 3: The main pipeline notice page, showing the A to Z list of pipeline types



Clicking on a name from the A to Z list (1) will show you summary details of all the pipeline notices currently published for that pipeline type. To find out more about a potential opportunity, click on its title.

Another way to find pipeline notices is to use the advanced search facility, and select 'Potential opportunities in the pipeline' as your search filter. See the section below on 'How to carry out more complex searches' to find out how to do this.

It's important to remember that when a public sector organisation publishes a pipeline notice, it does not necessarily mean that an opportunity will be offered in the future. You can refer to the 'Confidence' level alongside each notice to get an idea of how likely it is that a contract notice will be issued.

The summary details for each notice include the following information:

- **Project/requirement** – the title of the pipeline notice, and the name of the public sector organisation that has published it
- **Publication date** – when the notice was added to Contracts Finder
- **Approach to market** - this indicates whether any future contract that might arise from this notice would be offered as part of an existing framework agreement, or as a new procurement
- **Confidence** – this is the public sector organisation's opinion of how likely it is that the requirement outlined in the pipeline notice will result in a contract being issued and according to the year-by-year spend profile. The confidence level can be low, medium or high.
- **Value** – this shows the estimated value of the potential opportunity over the next three financial years.
- **Capital cost** - the total cost needed to fulfil the project or requirement - eg for building a new office block, the capital cost would be the combined purchase costs of land, buildings, construction and equipment, plus the cost of labour used for construction

Not all pipelines published by government and the wider public sector are available on Contracts Finder. For

example, details of any potential opportunities in public service broadcasting are published on the BBC website. Clicking on the link (2) will take you to a page listing online resources that publish notices for these pipeline types.

To view the full notice, click on its title. This will take you to a page containing the following additional information:

- the **reference number** assigned by the public sector organisation
- the projected **spend profile** for the next five financial years
- the **location** where the contract would be delivered
- the **name** of the public sector organisation
- an indication as to whether the requirement would be delivered as part of a **framework agreement**
- any **documents** that the public sector organisation has prepared that give more information about the expected project or requirement
- the **approach to market** and expected **contract notice publication date**
- **contact details**, should you need more information

Figure 4: Example of a pipeline type search results page

The screenshot shows the Contracts Finder interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Business Link logo and 'CONTRACTS FINDER' text. Below this, there are links for 'Welcome', 'My profile', 'Advanced search', 'Find suppliers', 'Find buyers', and 'Help and resources'. The main content area displays the search results for 'PIPELINE: CLINICAL AND MEDICAL LIFE SCIENCES'. It includes a search button, a description of the pipeline, and a table of results. The table has columns for 'Project / requirement', 'Approach to market', 'Confidence', 'Value 2012/13', 'Value 2013/14', 'Value 2014/15', and 'Total capital Cost'. There are four rows of results, each with a link to the project details.

Project / requirement	Approach to market	Confidence	Value 2012/13	Value 2013/14	Value 2014/15	Total capital Cost
Contract Injectors Various NHS Trusts	04/12/2013	High	£4,500,000	£4,500,000	£4,500,000	£27,000,000
Automated Endoscope Reprocessors Various NHS Trusts	31/01/2013	High	£6,000,000	£6,000,000	£6,000,000	£36,000,000
Sterile Services Various NHS Trusts	13/07/2014	High	£5,000,000	£5,000,000	£5,000,000	£30,000,000
Dental Decontamination Various NHS Trusts	28/02/2014	High	£12,000,000	£12,000,000	£12,000,000	£72,000,000

Search for details of what government is buying

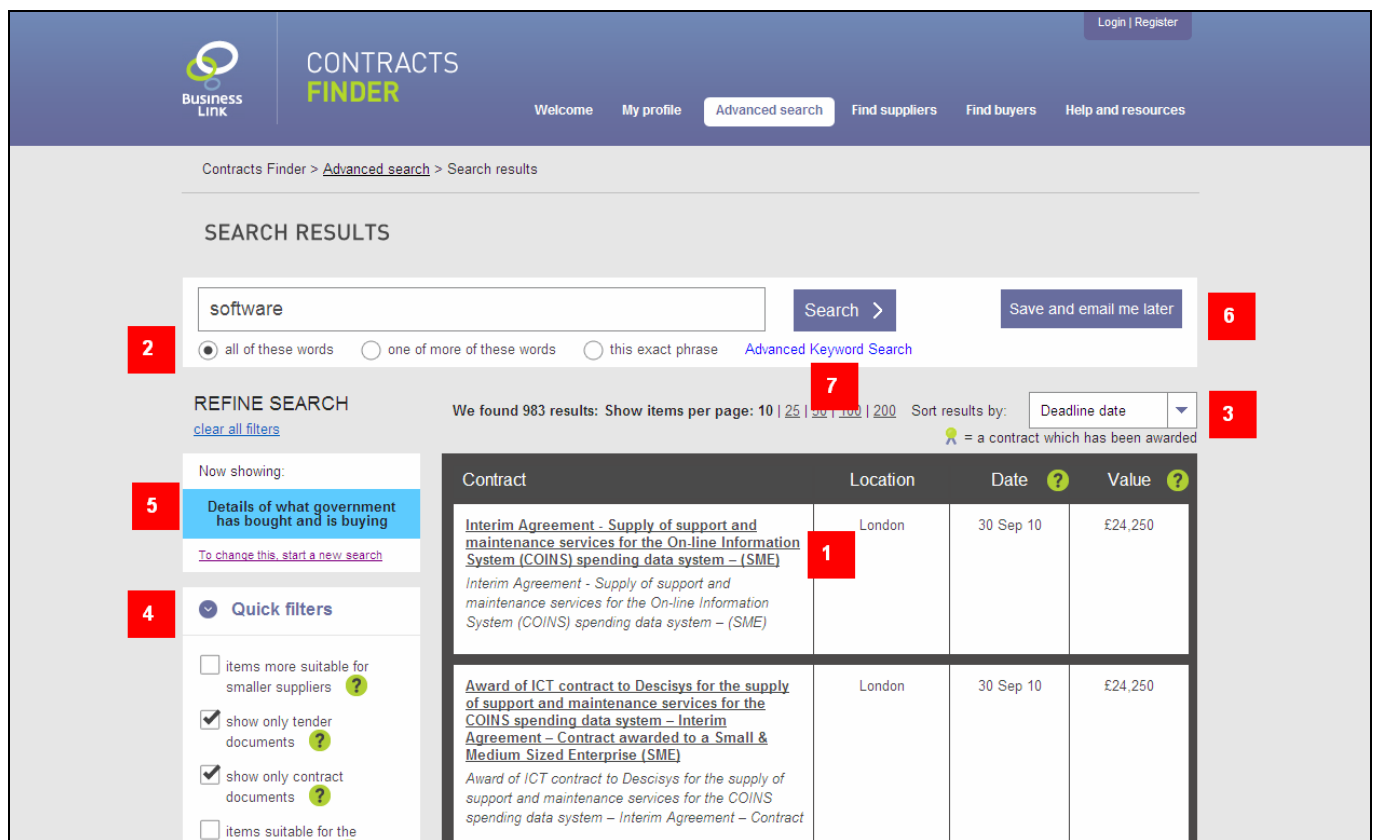
If you're only interested in contracts that have already been awarded, or where the tendering stage has been completed, use the 'See what is being bought by government' search box on the Contracts Finder welcome page.

This option lets you search for notices that relate to tender and contract documents published after a particular stage of the procurement process has ended. UK central government departments and their agencies have to publish documentation for all completed procurements worth more than £10,000 on Contracts Finder, as part of the government's transparency commitment.

You can start a search by typing one or more keywords into the 'See what is being bought by government' box.

This takes you to an alternative version of the 'Search results' page showing all notices relating to tender or contract.

Figure 5: Results page for an example 'What government is buying' search



From this page, you can:

- find out more about any of the notices shown, by clicking on their title (1)
- narrow down or expand your search by clicking on the 'all of these words', 'one of more of these words' or 'this exact phrase' buttons (2) – or by running the search again with different keywords
- sort the results (3) for easier reference – you can do this by relevance, publication date, deadline date, or value
- use filters (4) to fine-tune your results, such as by screening out notices relating to tenders or specifying a minimum value
- change your search to look for live opportunities instead (5), or include both live and closed opportunities
- create a saved search (6) so that you can set up email alerts
- run an advanced keyword search (7) – this gives you more control over what words you want Contracts Finder to search for – eg if you want to exclude particular words from your search results

How to carry out more complex searches

The two search boxes on the Contracts Finder home page let you quickly search for either live or closed opportunities. However, if you want to run more complex searches you can do this by clicking on the 'Advanced search' button (1) at the top of any page in Contracts Finder. Figure 6 below shows what you'll see:

Figure 6: The options available from the advanced search screen

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced search' page of the Contracts Finder. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Business Link' logo, 'CONTRACTS FINDER' title, and links for 'Welcome', 'My profile', 'Advanced search' (highlighted with a red box 1), 'Find suppliers', 'Find buyers', and 'Help and resources'. Below the navigation bar, the page title is 'Contracts Finder > Advanced search'. The main heading is 'ADVANCED SEARCH'. A paragraph explains the search options: 'Use the keyword search to find opportunities relevant to your business. You may also search using Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes. Alternatively, you can look for contracts published by a particular buyer or awarded to a particular supplier. For detailed guidance on using search [download our guide to Contracts Finder for suppliers](#). You can also find out potential opportunities over the next few years for a particular area or activity. These 'pipeline notices' can help you get ready for opportunities that might arise in the future.'

A section titled 'What type of information should we show you?' (highlighted with a red box 6) contains four radio button options: 'Live opportunities' (selected), 'Details of what government has bought and is buying', 'Potential opportunities in the pipeline', and 'Everything'. To the right of this section is a pop-up box asking 'Want to receive email updates?' with a close button and instructions: 'First you need to run a search. Enter the search terms on this page and press 'Search''.

Below this is the search input area. On the left, there are three tabs: 'by keyword' (selected), 'by CPV code' (highlighted with a red box 5), and 'by buyer'. The main search box is labeled 'Find notices about...' (highlighted with a red box 2) and contains the text 'Enter keywords here'. To the right of the search box is a link 'or use the combined search' (highlighted with a red box 4). Below the search box are three radio button options: 'all of these words' (selected), 'one of more of these words', and 'this exact phrase' (highlighted with a red box 3).

At the bottom, there are two sections: 'Location:' and 'Value:'. The 'Location:' section has a dropdown for 'within 0 miles of United Kingdom' and a checkbox for 'widen location search'. The 'Value:' section has two input fields for 'From £' (e.g. 20000) and 'to £' (e.g. 100000) and a checkbox for 'include overlapping values'.

The colour-coded section (6) lets you specify what notices you want to search – only live opportunities, what government has bought and is buying, potential opportunities in the pipeline, or everything on the system.

Choosing the 'Everything' option gives you more comprehensive filtering options, including the full list of OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) and non-OJEU notice types. See 'Notice types explained, below.

You can narrow down or expand your search (2) by clicking on the 'all of these words', 'one of more of these words' or 'this exact phrase' buttons. The location setting lets you restrict your search to a given radius of a town, city or other place (but not by postcode) (3). You can also exclude particular keywords by clicking on 'Combined search' (4).

As well as searching by keyword(s), this page lets you search by CPV codes, by the government buyer's name, or by a supplier's name ('awarded supplier'). You can switch between these options by clicking on the tabs to the left of the search box (5). You can, for example:

- search for notices that directly match one or more CPV codes – using this controlled vocabulary can be

very useful if you're interested in a very specific or specialised type of activity (if you're not familiar with CPV codes, see our quick introduction below)

- see all the contracts that a particular supplier has won
- view a list of all opportunities published by a particular government department or agency.

Fine-tune your searches with filters

Contracts Finder lets you customise your searches so that only notices relevant to you are shown in the search results. You can exclude notices above a certain value, or restrict your search to a particular geographic area. Filters are shown on the left hand side of the 'Search results' page.

There are six types of filter:

- **Quick filters** – for live opportunities, you can restrict your search to opportunities that are suitable for smaller suppliers and/or voluntary sector organisations. For closed opportunities, you get the same options plus the choice of filtering out either tender or contract documents
- **Value** – specify a minimum and/or maximum value for tenders and contracts
- **Location** – restrict searches to contracts being delivered within a certain radius (in miles) of any UK town, city or county
- **What is the notice for** – notices can be categorised as: supplies, services or works
- **Language** – restrict your search to notices in English or Welsh, or both
- **Date published** – view only notices published in the last 24 hours, the last 7, 31 or 60 days, or for a period of your choosing

Notice types explained

Searches can be filtered according to the type of notice. To do this, you'll need to select 'Everything' as your search option on the 'Search contracts' page. You can filter notices by the three basic categories on the system (Tentative, Award, Contract notice) (1), or refine your search to include or exclude more specific notice types by clicking on 'Show advanced types' (2).

Figure 7: Using the notice type filter and accessing the full list of notice types

The screenshot shows the search results interface. On the left, there are filter sections: 'Location' (set to United Kingdom), 'Notice types' (with checkboxes for Tentative, Award, and Contract notice), and 'What the notice is for'. A red box labeled '1' highlights the 'Notice types' section. Below it, a red box labeled '2' highlights the 'Show advanced types' link. The main area displays a table of search results with columns for description, location, date, and value.

requirement to provide the following products/services under the Framework: Lot 1 - furniture and			
Furniture and associated services Furniture and associated services	London	No Data	£0
Furniture Framework Agreement Provision of Office Furniture including Desking, Workstations, Seating, Office Storage, Shelving	United Kingdom	No Data	£0
Furniture Framework Agreement Provision of Office Furniture including Desking, Workstations, Seating, Office Storage, Shelving	United Kingdom	No Data	£0
Furniture Reuse service provision of a Furniture Reuse service for the residents of the Borough. Furniture reuse schemes collect	West Midlands	24 May 12	No Data
UK Bury: furniture (incl. office furniture), furnishings, domestic appliances (excl. lighting) and Services: Furniture (incl. office furniture), furnishings, domestic appliances (excl. lighting) and	Greater Manchester North	18 Jun 12	No Data

Basic types

- **Tentative** – these are published when a public body is planning to issue a tender, but wants to gauge the level of interest from suppliers first.
- **Award** – these notices are published after the evaluation period has ended. They list the successful suppliers, and indicate whether each one intends to subcontract any or all of the work.
- **Contract notice** – these are live opportunities that you can bid for. The notice explains what is being bought, and the procurement process that will be used. When you view a notice, it's described as either:
 - **'Below OJEU'** - contracts where the estimated value is **less** than the relevant Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) threshold – currently just over £113,000 for most supplies and services from central government.
 - **'OJEU'** – higher-value procurements worth **more** than the relevant OJEU threshold.

Advanced types

You can only filter by advanced types if you have chosen 'Everything' as your filtering option on the 'Advanced search' page. Clicking on 'Show advanced types' (2) lets you filter by the following notice types:

Advanced notice type	Sourced from OJEU?	Notes
Award	No	Limits results to award notices that prime contractors have published
Other	No	Limits results to OJEU notices ie contracts over the relevant Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) threshold – currently just over £113,000 for most supplies and services from central government
Tender or contract	No	Returns only notices published as part of the government's transparency commitment, ie published tendering and contract documentation
Opportunity	No	Limits results to opportunities published by prime contractors
Voluntary ex ante transparency	Yes	Limits results to announcements of <i>closed</i> opportunities sourced from OJEU which aren't available to bid for, but which buyers are obliged to publish. The procurement regulations request this to be done in some circumstances where the direct award of contracts has been allowed
Notice For Additional Information	Yes	Buyers sometimes publish these notices if the procurement process has been stopped for any reason, or if they need to provide extra information to help suppliers prepare their bid
Results Design Contest	Yes	A notification of the winning entry of a design contest
Design Contest	Yes	These are competitions in which a contracting authority invites the submission of plans and designs which are then judged by a jury. The buyer then acquires the use or ownership of the plans or designs which the jury has selected
Contract Notice Concession	Yes	Opportunities for a private company to enter into an agreement

		with the government to have the exclusive right to operate, maintain and carry out public works for a set number of years
Public Works Concession	Yes	These are where a private company enters into an agreement with the government to have the exclusive right to operate, maintain and carry out investment in a public utility - such as gas or water supply - for a set number of years
Simplified Contract on DPS	Yes	A Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is an electronic catalogue set up by a public body to purchase commonly used goods, works or services during a fixed period. When the buyer wishes to place an order under its DPS it must first advertise its intention using a simplified contract notice. Any potential supplier can join the DPS at any time, provided it meets the selection criteria and submits an indicative tender to the contracting authority that complies with the specification
Buyer profile	No	Selects notices published on a buyer's profile page on another procurement system, ie the notice is published electronically on a web page
Qualification System - Utilities	Yes	Refers to a selection process used to create a register of suppliers for utilities works and services which forms the basis for the award of contracts and/or framework agreements. The works and services required are sometimes split into smaller parts – 'lots' - for qualification purposes
Contract Award Notice - Utilities	Yes	Similar to contract award notices, but for utilities contracts.
Contract Notice Utilities	Yes	A different contract notice form used for utilities works, supplies and services
Periodic Indicative Notice - Utilities	No	Indicates the annual estimated procurement spend for a contracting authority
Contract Award Notice	Yes	These notify suppliers and the public about the award of a contract to one or more suppliers, and include the price quoted and the reason for the selection
Contract notice	Yes	Limits results to live or closed contract opportunities. If you want to search only <i>live</i> opportunities from OJEU, tick the quick filter 'show only live opportunities' and this box
Prior Information Notice (PIN)	Yes	PINs let potential suppliers know that a public body plans to issue a tender. They are the OJEU version of 'tentative' notices – see below
Tentative	No	Below OJEU notices that let potential suppliers know that a public body plans to issue a tender. Often used when a buyer wants to gauge the level of interest from suppliers before advertising a contract notice.
Pipeline	No	Potential opportunities from the UK public sector that might be advertised in the future.

Contract Award	No	Below OJEU notices that notify suppliers and the public about the award of a contract to one or more suppliers, including the price quoted and the reason for the selection.
Contract	No	Limits results to below OJEU live or closed contract notices.

CPV codes – a smarter way to search

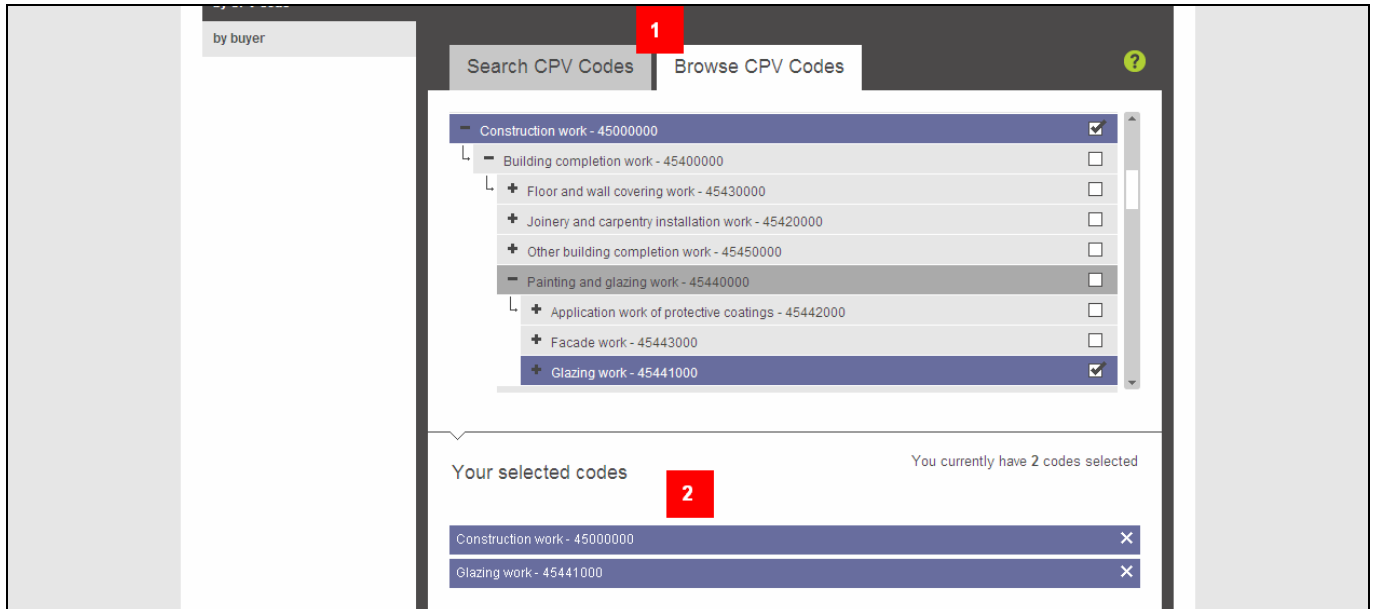
Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes are used by public sector buyers to classify contracts. They are eight-digit codes that can be used to represent anything from a very broad category of goods or services to a very specific one. There are thousands of individual CPV codes, covering a vast range of activities.

Every notice published on Contracts Finder is tagged with one or more CPV codes. Here’s an example of how they work:

- **45000000** is the code used for ‘construction work’ – a very broad category
- **45440000** is a subcategory that refers to ‘painting and glazing’ work – note that the code starts with the same two digits as the ‘construction work’ category, showing that it’s part of that group
- **45442190** is an even more specific subcategory – ‘paint-stripping work’

If you’re looking for contracts, you can search using one or more CPV codes. You have the option of browsing for codes – using a series of expanding menus – or simply typing in keywords one at a time and letting Contracts Finder search for matching codes. Use the tabs **(1)** to switch between browse and search modes.

Figure 8: Using the CPV search and browse functions to create more specific searches



You don’t have to use CPV codes but they can be a useful way of searching if your business specialises in particular types of work. You can use as many codes as you like - broad categories, specific ones or combinations of both **(2)**.

Search summary and top tips

1. Wait between clicking on filters. Once you click on an item, it takes a couple of seconds for the page to automatically refresh. Wait for the refresh to load completely before you click another item.

2. When you type more than one word into the **search box**, you can choose whether Contracts Finder searches for notices containing **all** of the words, **one or more** of the words, or the **exact phrase** you've entered. This can be useful if, say, you want to search only for notices related to 'market research' and not just any notice that has 'research' associated with it. The default setting is 'one or more of these words'. If you want to exclude a particular word or phrase, use the advanced search.
3. You can use **filters** to narrow down your search – for example, if you are only interested in live opportunities or contracts over a certain value. You can use **combinations** of filters to customise your searches even further – for example, to see only contract notices over £200,000 posted in the last 14 days
4. If you want to **search using CPV codes**, remember that you **can't** enter these directly into the search box. Instead, type in some keywords and let the system find the matching CPV codes for you, or pick the codes yourself by clicking on the 'Browse by CPV codes' tab.
5. Remember that Contracts Finder also holds details of closed contracts that you can no longer tender for. You can use filters to **exclude closed opportunities** from your search.
6. If you are getting too many results, excluding certain **types of notice** is a good way of making search results more manageable. See the section above on 'Notice types explained'.

Email alerts

Contracts Finder's email alerts service is free to use and you can create any number of alerts. Here's how to set up an alert:

1. First, do a search and use filters to fine-tune it until it comes up with relevant notices.
2. Then click the 'Save and email me later' button.
3. If you haven't already registered with Contracts Finder or logged in to your account, you'll be asked to do so – registration is free and takes a couple of minutes.
4. Now log in with your user name and password.
5. Check the details of the search you've saved and give it a name.
6. Choose if and how often you want to get email alerts.
7. Finally, you'll see a summary page showing all the alerts you have set up so far. You can change your settings from this page - including how often you receive emails - and view details of all the alerts you've received.
8. Whenever you next log in, you can go to your 'My Profile' page to view your saved searches and email alerts, and change the settings for each one.

Your My Profile page

Once you have registered with Contracts Finder a My Profile page will automatically be created for you. This page will let you manage all your main activities in Contracts Finder in one place – including saved searches, watched contracts and email alerts.

The My Profile page lets you create a business profile, with as little or as much detail as you choose. Doing this means that businesses and government buyers can find your details when they search Contracts Finder to find potential suppliers. You can keep your business profile private or allow other registered users to find your business in the Supplier Directory.

You can attach CPV codes to your profile to describe what your business does. If you're not familiar with these codes, see our feature above. This means that buyers can match up any new contract opportunities with businesses working in that sector.

Supplier Directory – where buyers find suppliers

Contracts Finder includes an A to Z list of suppliers who have registered on the system and marked their profile as 'public'. You can see this by clicking on the 'Find suppliers' button at the top of any page in Contracts Finder. You need to be registered and logged in to use this feature.

It's worth adding your business to the directory because buyers can use this list to identify potential suppliers for any new opportunities they intend to publish. Buyers have the option of sending email notifications to particular suppliers once they've published a new notice. Businesses that have won government contracts can also use the directory if they're looking for other businesses to subcontract work to.

Remember that your profile has to be set to 'public' before anyone else can see it. You can do this by clicking the 'Add business' link on your My Profile page.

Some frequently asked questions

1. Using the search facility	
The search is coming up with too many results	Try using a more specific search term, eg 'painting and decorating' instead of 'building services'. You can use filters to narrow down your search, eg by screening out contracts that have too high or too low a value.
The search didn't find any matches	Check that you haven't made a mistake when setting up your filters, for example by ticking the 'Wales' box in the language filter or by specifying a value or date range that's too narrow. Using an ampersand symbol (&) in the search box can also cause this to happen.
How do I view all live opportunities on the system?	Type the * symbol in the search box, and make sure only the 'Show only live opportunities' box is ticked under 'Quick filters'.
How do I check if a particular notice would have appeared in any or all of the saved searches I've set up?	<p>If you are concerned that you are not receiving the relevant email alerts for your business or you just wish to check if you are being alerted to the opportunities that you are interested in, use the following steps to update your saved search criteria to ensure you don't miss anything.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Select 'Search Contracts'.2. Search for the notice (if you have already found the notice in question follow the instructions below).3. Select the title of the notice. (This will take you to the 'View Contracts' page).4. Select 'Does this contact match any of my saved searches'.5. Select the action 'Check if this contract matches your saved search'.6. If you have a match, the page will refresh and a green tick will appear in the 'matched' column.7. You can view why this notice matched by selecting 'Show Why'.8. You will be able to check if the notice you are viewing has matched your

	<p>'keywords/CPV codes' or 'Filters'.</p> <p>Each time you select 'Check' the page will refresh. If there is a match, a green tick will appear in the 'matched' column for that search. You will also be able to check if you received an alert for this notice</p>
How do I make Contracts Finder show only newer contracts, say from the last month or so?	Contracts Finder allows you to search for notices published during a specified date range. You can alter the date range by changing the 'Date published' settings on the left hand side of the search results page.
Can I use CPV codes to search for contracts? And do I have to know these codes first?	Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV) codes let you specify the exact type(s) of work you are interested in. You can run searches by entering keywords and letting Contracts Finder match them to CPV codes, or choose your codes with the on-screen picker.
I want to do a CPV search, but can't figure out how	You can search or browse for CPV codes from the main search page. You can find this by clicking on the 'Search contracts' button on any page in Contracts Finder. Next to the search box, you'll see a tab called 'by CPV codes'. Select this and you'll be given the option to 'Search by CPV code' or 'Browse by CPV code' by clicking on the relevant tab.
I already know what CPV codes I want to search for - can't I just copy-and-paste multiple codes into the search box?	No – you need to enter a keyword first, and then choose a relevant CPV code from the list shown. You can then type another keyword into the search box, pick some more terms, and repeat the process as many times as necessary.
2. Viewing notices	
What does 'View OJEU' mean?	<p>This refers to a notice originally published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Public sector buyers have to place an advertisement in the OJEU if a new contract is worth more than a certain amount. This is currently just over £113,000 for supplies and services with central government.</p> <p>The online version of the OJEU is the Tenders Electronic Daily website, or TED. You can access OJEU notices on Contracts Finder, as the system is automatically updated with new notices from TED every night.</p>
What are 'pipeline notices', and why are these described as 'potential opportunities'?	These are opportunities that public sector organisations might offer in the future. Because they are published well in advance of any contract notice being issued, they give you the chance to plan and prepare for a possible bid.
How can I tell if a pipeline notice will actually result in a firm contract being advertised in the future?	Each pipeline notice is given a 'confidence' rating by the public sector organisation that published it. The rating can be low, medium or high. It gives you an idea of how likely it is that a contract notice will be issued for the requirement or project described in the notice. You can also contact the organisation directly, as contact details are included in each pipeline notice.
When will more pipeline types be added to Contracts Finder?	New pipeline types will be added throughout 2012.
I'm interested in subcontracting opportunities from larger suppliers that have won government contracts –	<p>The search facility doesn't let you filter by subcontracting notices only, but you can view these notices as an RSS feed.</p> <p>Click on the 'Data feeds' link at the bottom of any page on Contracts Finder, then</p>

how do I find these?	click on the 'All private sector sub contract opportunities, contracts and notices' link under the heading 'RSS Feeds'. This will show a list of current subcontracting opportunities. Clicking on a notice title will take you to a page giving more information.
3. Email alerts and watched contracts	
How do I keep track of the progress of a particular notice?	When you view a notice in Contracts Finder, you can choose to 'watch this contract'. This lets you keep an eye on the closing date for tender responses, and find out when the contract has been awarded and who it went to.
How do I set up a watched contract?	When viewing a notice, click the 'Watch contract' button near the top of the page. You must be registered with Contracts Finder to do this. On your 'My profile' page you can view the status of all your watched contracts - eg to see if a contract has been awarded - check deadline dates, or view the notice. You can stop watching contracts at any time.
Why doesn't the 'watched contracts' feature work for all contracts?	<p>Notices can't be watched if the deadline date has passed. Deadlines are shown in the 'date' column on the search results page, and also when you view a notice.</p> <p>Note that for contract award notices, the deadline date will either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the duration of the contract - for example, if an award notice for a 24-month contract was published on 30 September 2011 the 'deadline date' would be 30 September 2013 • where the start and end dates for a contract has been specified by a buyer, the deadline date will be the same as the end date
How often will I get email alerts?	For each saved search, you can choose to receive emails every day, every three days, every seven days, every 10 days, every 14 days or every 30 days - or not at all. You can change this at any time.
I'm not receiving any email alerts	Check first that you have confirmed your email address with Contracts Finder. When you registered for the service, you should have received a confirmation email from alerts@businesslink.gov.uk . This message contains a weblink that you need to have clicked on to confirm your email address and complete your registration. Once you've done that, you should start receiving email alerts.
I'm getting email alerts telling me there are '0 updates' - why is this?	<p>If you're finding that most of your email alerts contain zero updates, consider changing your email alerts settings so that you receive email alerts less frequently - say from 3 days to 14 days. It's also worth double-checking your search criteria to make sure this isn't screening out notices that you might be interested in.</p> <p>Also, remember that each email alert only shows new notices added since you received the previous alert. It's not a running total of all matches recorded so far. To check the earlier matches, you'll need to look at the previous alerts you've received or log in to Contracts Finder and re-run the saved search that you used to set up the email alert.</p>

4. Procurement rules	
Why are there different tendering processes for low- and high-value contracts?	This is because the procurement regulations put specific requirements on advertising contracts above a certain value – see ‘What are OJEU notices?’ above. For contracts that are worth less than the OJEU thresholds, these procedures don’t have to be followed – so buyers have more freedom to decide how to advertise contracts in line with their own procurement policies.
Why aren’t some tenders open for bidding any more?	Contracts Finder is being used by departments and agencies to meet their commitments under the government’s transparency agenda. This means that they have to publish their tender and contract documents for completed procurements, so that people can see how their money has been spent. When you view a notice for a closed procurement, you’ll see a note saying ‘You cannot apply for this opportunity, the tender process has begun and this notice is for information only’. You can use filters to exclude closed notices from search results if you wish.
5. General questions	
Is all of the UK public sector covered by Contracts Finder?	Currently the system includes notices and documents published by UK central government departments, their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies. Some local authorities also place their notices on Contracts Finder. The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own procurement portals. Several existing suppliers to government publish their subcontract notices on Contracts Finder. These are published alongside government notices, so you can find them by searching for ‘live opportunities’ from the Contracts Finder welcome page or advanced search.
Do I have to register to use Contracts Finder?	No – you can run searches and download documents without registering. You’ll need to register if you want to receive email alerts, set up watched contracts or add your business to the supplier directory.
How do I make my business appear in the supplier directory?	You’ll need to be a registered user to do this. Go to your My Profile page, and click the ‘Add business’ link in the left-hand column. Then set your profile to ‘Public’ to make your business’ details visible in the supplier directory, or set it to ‘Private’ if you don’t want to be listed.
Where can I get more help with using Contracts Finder?	Look out for the green question mark buttons at various places on Contracts Finder. They are there to help explain particular terms or actions you can carry out on the system. There is also a ‘Help and Resources’ section on Contracts Finder. You can access this by clicking on the ‘Help and resources’ button at the top right of each page, then selecting a Contracts Finder sub-topic from the drop-down menu and clicking ‘Continue’.

This guide was last updated on 15 May 2012