



Single Source
Regulations Office

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Annual qualifying defence contract statistics: 2016/17

12 June 2017

This annual bulletin presents key statistics relating to contracts that became qualifying defence contracts (QDCs) and qualifying sub-contracts (QSCs) between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. This data is reported by defence contractors to the SSRO through contract reports, as required by Part 5 of the Single Source Contract Regulations 2014. Data is also presented for the 2015/16 financial year, the year in which contract reports were first submitted.

As of 31 March 2017, the SSRO had been notified of 97 contracts that became QDCs/QSCs. Contractors have one month after the date the contract becomes a QDC to submit reports, and as of 30 April 2017 the SSRO had received contract reports for 88 contracts that became QDCs/QSCs by 31 March 2017, which the following analysis is based on.

All data is based on the latest submitted report for each QDC/QSC as of 30 April 2017, to reflect the most recently reported contract data. Where any figures have been revised from those previously published, this is denoted by an †.

The following sections contain statistics on:

- **Key Statistics 2016/17:** A summary of key figures and trends.
- **Number, duration and SME involvement:** The number and average duration of QDCs/QSCs as well as the number of QDCs/QSCs with SMEs.
- **Price:** The total estimated contract price of QDCs/QSCs, split by Allowable Costs and profit, and the contract pricing methods employed.
- **Profit:** Estimated contract profit rates, including the adjustments made to the baseline profit rate, and the variation seen across QDCs/QSCs.
- **Sub-contracts:** The number and estimated price of the sub-contracts that assist in the delivery of the QDCs/QSCs. Data is only available for the top 20 sub-contracts for each QDC/QSC with a price of greater than £1 million.

Summary

In the financial year from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017:

- **54** contracts became QDCs/QSCs (**44** QDCs, **10** QSCs).
- The total estimated price of these QDCs/QSCs was **£7.9 billion** (**£7.2 billion** of Allowable Costs, **£0.7 billion** of profit).
- The mean contract profit rate estimated was **10.72 per cent**, a reduction of **0.85** percentage points from 2015/16.
- The most commonly reported regulated pricing method (by number of QDCs/QSCs) was firm pricing. By total contract price, the most used was cost-plus pricing.

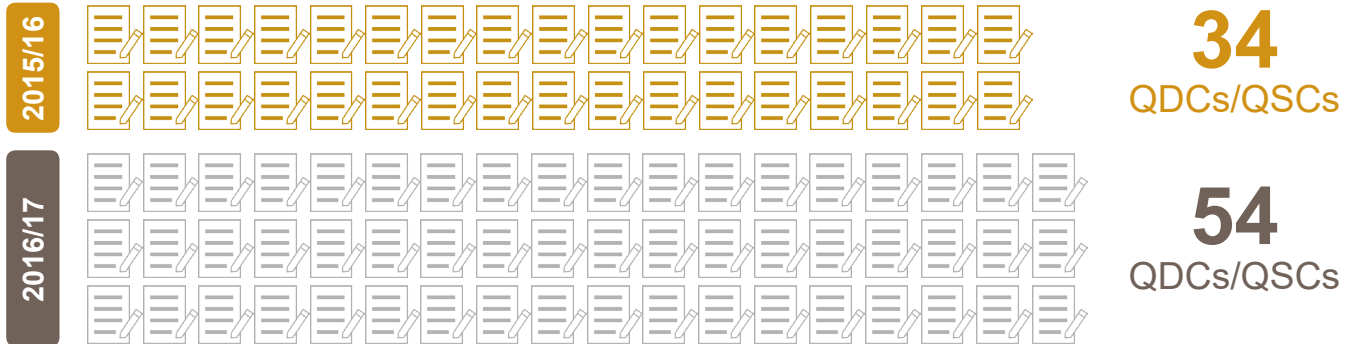
Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2017:

- **88** contracts became QDCs/QSCs, (**75** QDCs, **13** QSCs).
- The total estimated contract price of all QDCs/QSCs was **£19.7 billion** (**£17.8 billion** of Allowable Costs, and **£1.9 billion** of profit).
- The mean estimated contract profit rate for all QDCs/QSCs was **11.05 per cent**.
- The most commonly reported regulated pricing method (by number of QDCs/QSCs) was firm pricing, with 67 of the 88 QDCs/QSCs using this method in at least a proportion of the contract. By total contract price, the most common was target pricing.
- The average estimated contract duration was **4.4 years**.

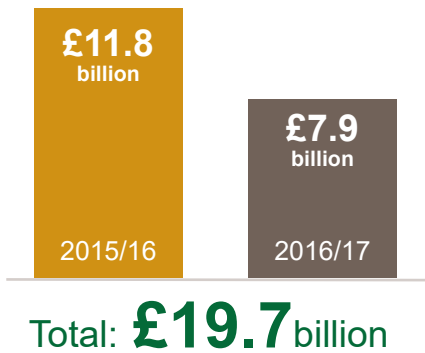
Key Statistics 2016/17

Based on reports received for 88 QDC/QSCs

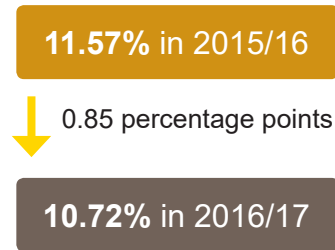
Number of QDCs/QSCs reported to the SSRO increased



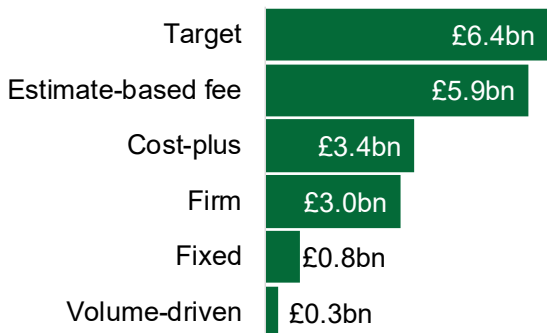
Total QDC/QSC price decreased



Average estimated profit rate reduced



Target pricing was the most reported regulated pricing method (by price), across 2015/16 and 2016/17



Across 2015/16 and 2016/17



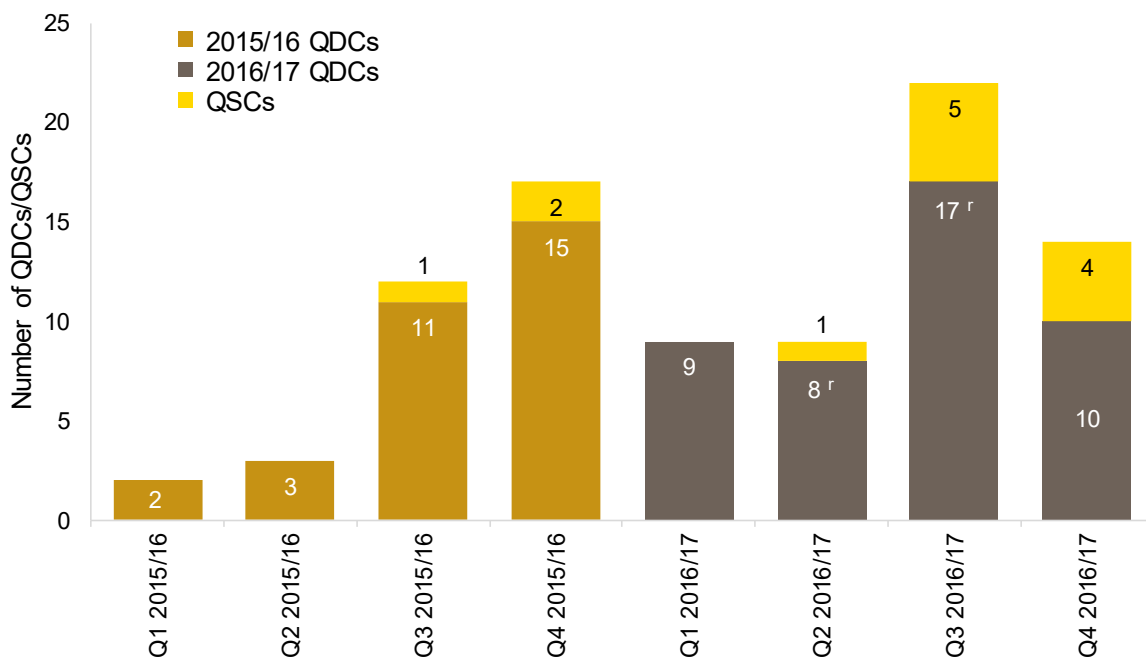
¹ Only the top 20 sub-contracts with a price of greater than £1 million are reported for each contract

Number, duration and SME involvement

Summary

- In 2016/17 (between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017), the SSRO received reports for **54** QDCs/QSCs.
- Since 1 April 2015, the SSRO had received reports for **88** QDCs/QSCs (**34** in 2015/16).
- **Six** of these QDCs/QSCs were with contracting companies that identified as a small or medium enterprise (SME) (**three** in 2015/16 and **three** in 2016/17).
- The average (mean) estimated contract duration was consistent across both years, at **4.4 years** in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs, and **4.5 years** in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs.

Figure 1: Number of QDCs/QSCs by financial quarter

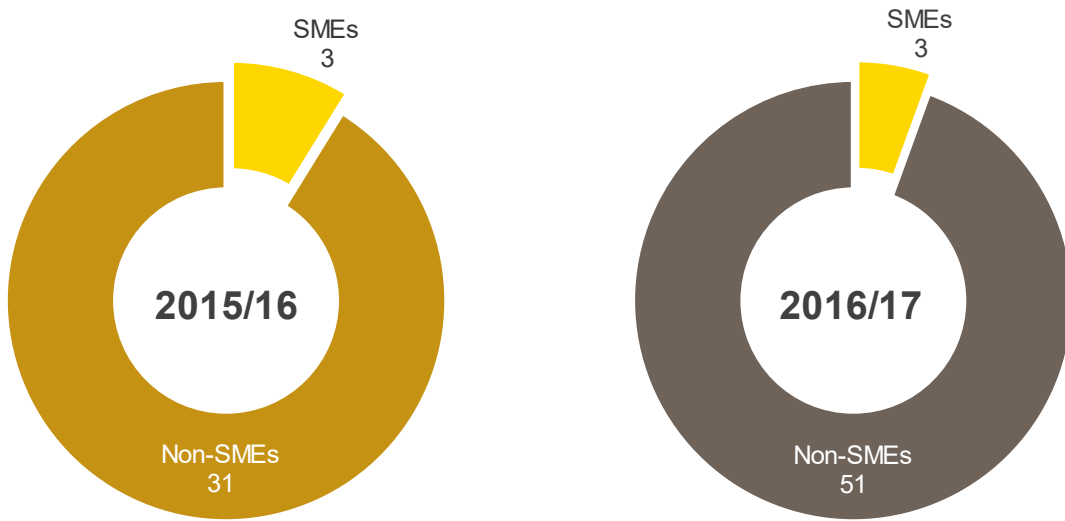


As shown in Figure 1 above, the SSRO had received reports for a total of 88 QDCs/QSCs as of 31 April 2017. There were 44 QDCs and 10 QSCs in 2016/17, and 31 QDCs and three QSCs in 2015/16. These 88 contracts were awarded to 45 different contracting companies. There were a further nine contracts which the SSRO had been notified of, but had not received contract reports for by 31 April 2017.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Figure 2 below shows, of the 88 QDCs/QSCs, how many were contracted with small or medium enterprises (SMEs), as reported by contractors. There were six QDCs/QSCs with SMEs overall, three in 2015/16 and a further three in 2016/17. Note that the SME status is as reported by the organisation themselves; no verification on whether these align to the EU definition of an SME has taken place for the purposes of this analysis.

Figure 2: Proportion of QDCs/QSCs that are contracted to SMEs



Duration

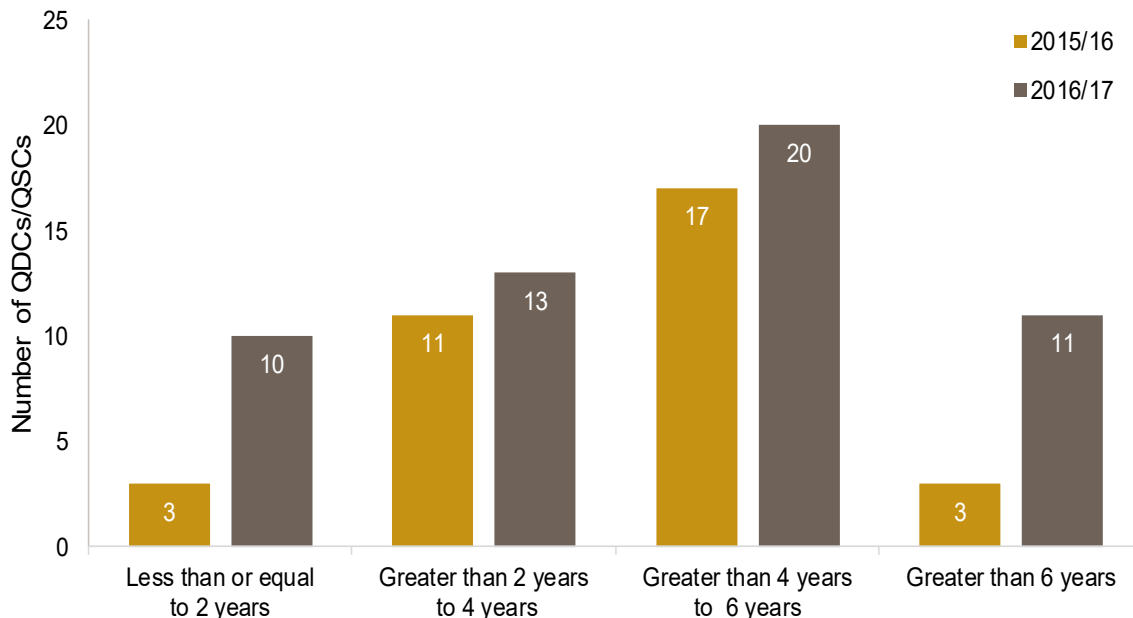
The average (mean) estimated duration of QDCs/QSCs has remained consistent at around 4.5 years in each period (see Table 1).

Table 1: Average (mean) estimated contract duration of QDCs/QSCs by financial year

	Average duration (years)
2015/16	4.4 ¹
2016/17	4.5
Total	4.4

In 2015/16, there were a greater proportion of contracts between 2 to 6 years in length, as can be seen in Figure 3. In 2016/17, there is more of an even spread across the different duration bands. Approximately 10 per cent of QDCs/QSCs had an estimated duration of less than two years in length in 2015/16, and this increased to 20 per cent in 2016/17. Similarly, for longer QDCs/QSCs, around 10 per cent were reported to be longer than six years in 2015/16, but this increased to 20 per cent in 2016/17 contracts. The most frequently reported estimated contract duration was between four and six years, in both periods.

Figure 3: Number of QDCs/QSCs by estimated duration

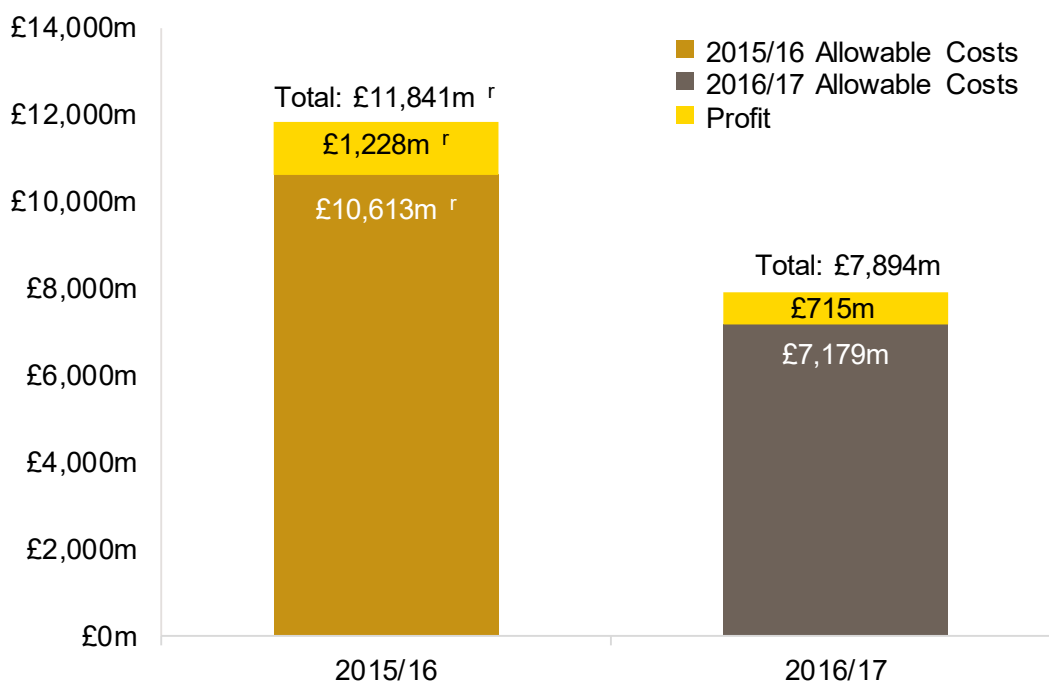


Price

Summary

- In 2016/17, the total estimated price of QDCs/QSCs was **£7.9 billion (£7.2 billion of Allowable Costs, £0.7 billion of profit)**.
- Since 1 April 2015, the total price of QDCs/QSCs was **£19.7 billion (£17.8 billion of Allowable Costs, and £1.9 billion of profit)**.
- Across both years, the majority of QDCs/QSCs used firm pricing as the regulated pricing method in at least a proportion of the contract. In terms of the contract price associated with each pricing method, target pricing was the method with the highest value associated with it.

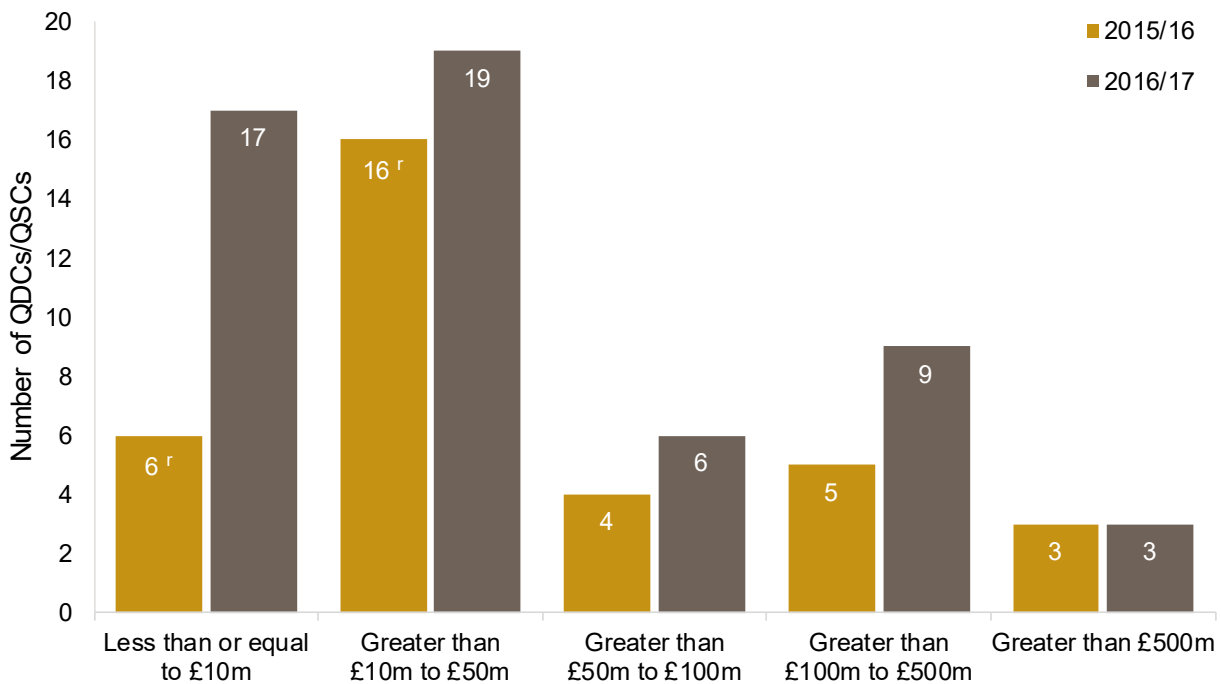
Figure 4: Estimated total contract price of QDCs/QSCs by financial year¹



Whilst the total number of QDCs/QSCs increased from 2015/16 to 2016/17, Figure 4 shows that the total contract price decreased compared to the 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs. There were a greater number of lower-value contracts in 2016/17. Figure 5 shows the number of QDCs/QSCs by price band. In both years, the £0m to £10m and £10m to £50m bands were the most common, and the largest increase was in the lower value, £0m to £10m band.

The values reported are the estimated price as agreed at the time of agreement, and may not necessarily reflect the outturn price at contract completion.

¹ Note: Calculating the percentage of profit on total Allowable Costs using the above figures represents the cost weighted average profit rate. Therefore, this will differ from the average estimated profit rate reported later in the document.

Figure 5: Number of QDCs/QSCs by estimated contract price

Regulated pricing methods

The Single Source Contract Regulations 2014 (Regulation 10) specifies six regulated pricing methods that can be used to determine the price payable for a QSC/QSC. The method used to price a QDC can influence the final price and profit payable, and the incentive to control costs. The six pricing methods are as follows:

- Firm pricing
- Fixed pricing
- Cost-plus pricing
- Estimate-based fee pricing
- Volume-driven pricing
- Target pricing

For a complete description of each of the six regulated pricing methods, please refer to the SSRO's *Contract pricing methods reported in Qualifying Defence Contracts 2015-16* statistical bulletin².

Contracts can employ multiple pricing methods for different elements of a QDC/QSC, and contractors provide a breakdown of the total contract price attributable to each of the six pricing methods in their contract reports. Figure 6 presents the number of QDCs/QSCs that used each of the top 10 most frequently reported regulated pricing methods, or combination of pricing methods. The single most reported pricing method was firm pricing, with 67 out of 88 QDCs/QSCs utilising this method in at least a proportion of the contract.

Out of the 88 QDCs/QSCs, 60 of them (68 per cent) reported only using one regulated pricing method in the pricing of the contract, whilst 25 QDCs/QSCs reported using two pricing methods (28 per cent). There were three QDCs/QSCs that reported using three different pricing methods (3 per cent).

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contract-pricing-methods-reported-in-qualifying-defence-contracts-2015-16>

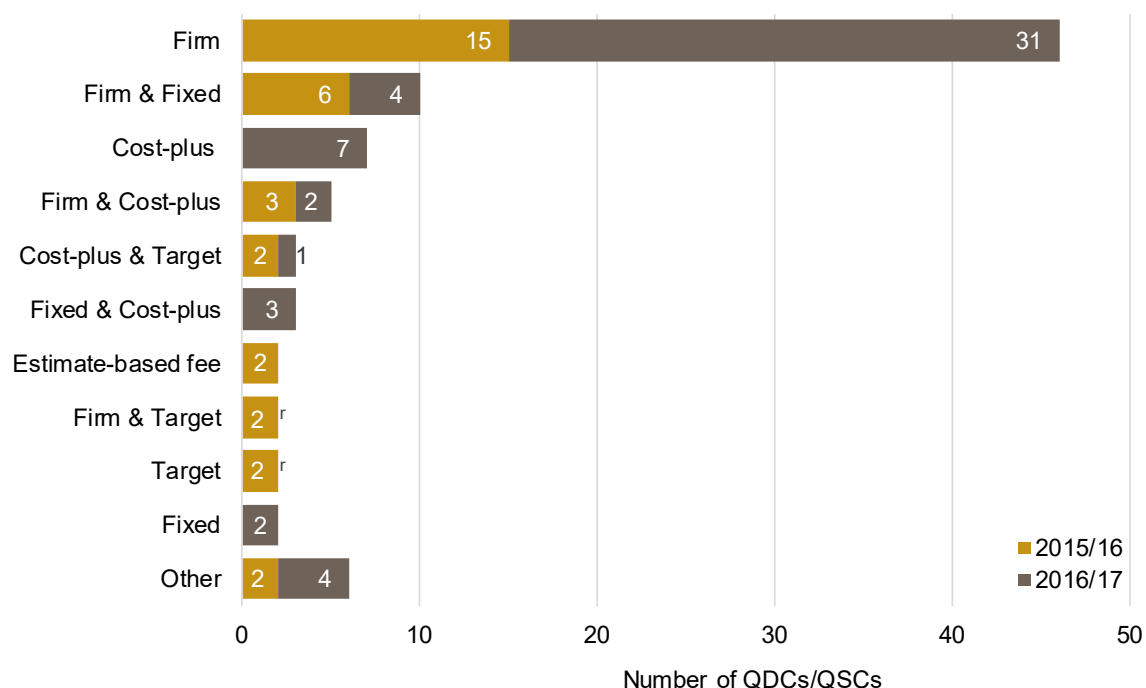
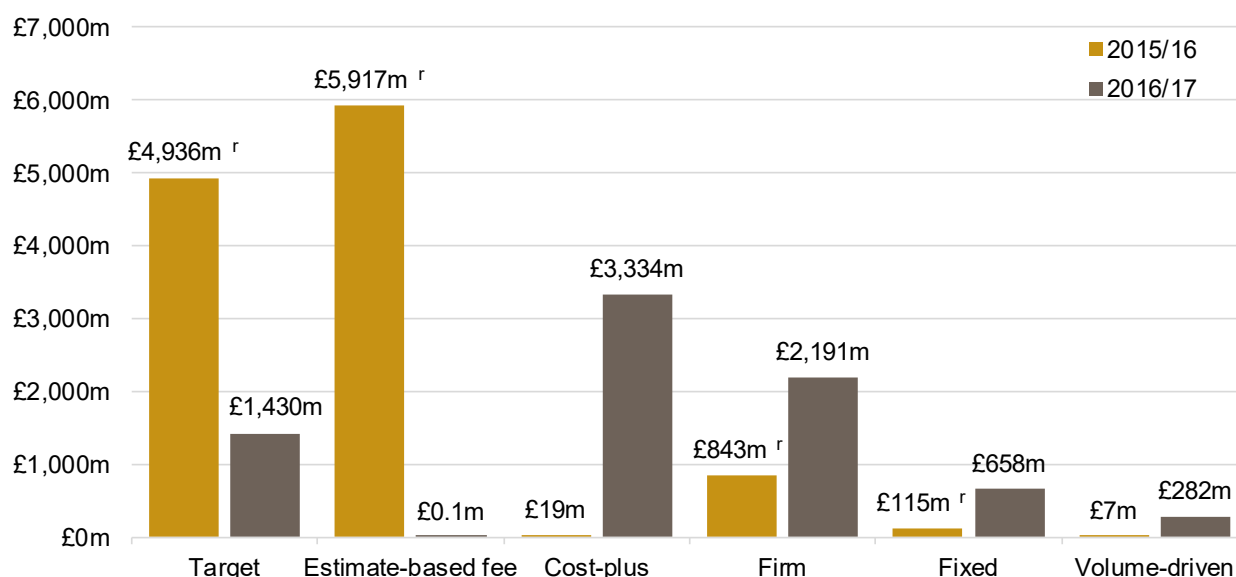
Figure 6: Top 10 most frequently reported combinations of regulated pricing methods³

Figure 7 presents the sum of the contract price that were attributed to each of the pricing methods across all QDCs/QSCs. It shows that, across the two years, target pricing was pricing method with the highest contract price associated with it overall, but this varies when looking at the two years individually. Estimate-based fee pricing was the most widely used in 2015/16 (£5,917m), whilst cost-plus pricing was the most common in 2016/17 (£3,334m).

Figure 7: Total estimated price of QDCs/QSCs, by regulated pricing method

³ Please note that these figures do not align with the total contract price reported in Figure 4, primarily because pricing method values may sometimes be reported in currencies other than pounds sterling. Where this occurred, the Bank of England exchange rates were used to convert values into sterling, which may differ from the exchange rates contractors used when reporting their total contract price.

Profit

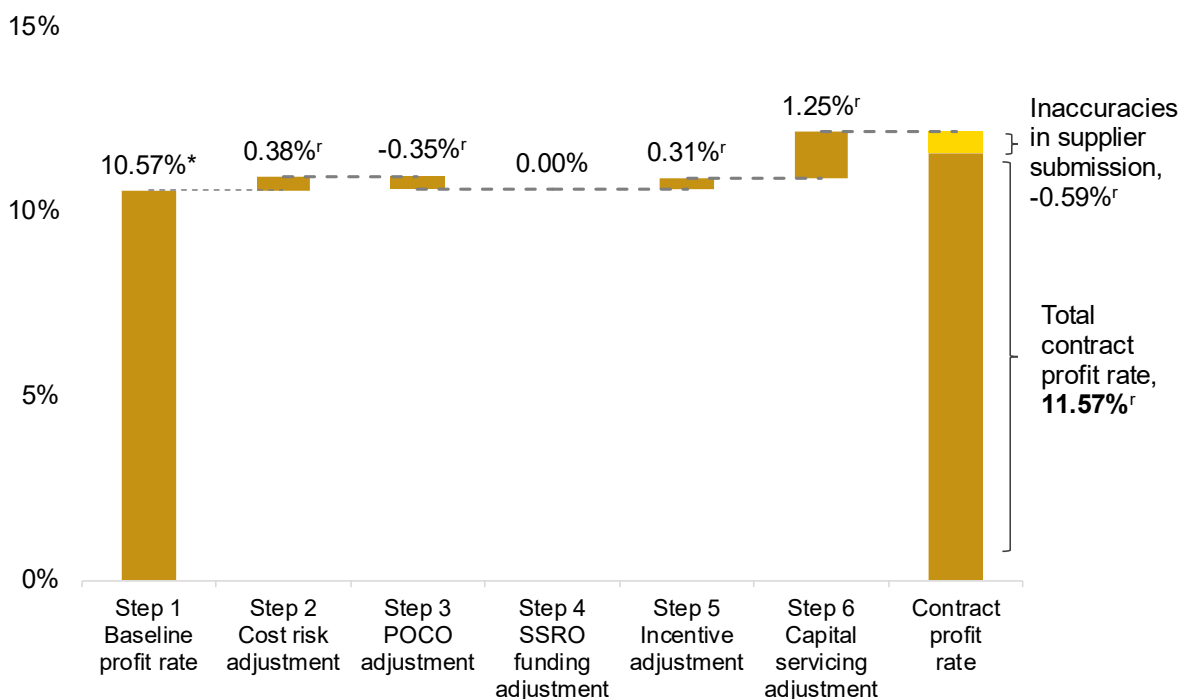
Summary

- In the 2016/17 financial year (between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017), the average contract profit rate (CPR) was **10.72 per cent**, compared to **11.57 per cent** in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs, an average reduction of **0.85 percentage points**.
- Aside from the baseline profit rate, the adjustment with the most impact on the CPR was the capital servicing adjustment (CSA) in both financial years. The average CSA was **1.25 percentage points** in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs and **1.36 percentage points** in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs.
- Of the **88** QDCs/QSCs, **eight** had reported a profit-on-cost-once (POCO) adjustment, whilst 17 had reported an incentive adjustment, across both financial years.

The Defence Reform Act 2014 and the Single Source Contract Regulations 2014 together prescribe a six-step process which should be used to determine the contract profit rate for a QSC/QSC. For more information on these six steps, please refer to the SSRO's *Guidance on the baseline profit rate and its adjustment*⁴. The data presented in this section is based on estimated profit rates at the time of agreement, and does not necessarily represent the profit that will be achieved once the contract is complete.

Figure 8 below shows the average (mean) adjustments made to the baseline profit rate, for the 34 contracts that became QDCs/QSCs in 2015/16. Figure 9 shows the same analysis, but for the 54 contracts that became QDCs/QSCs in 2016/17.

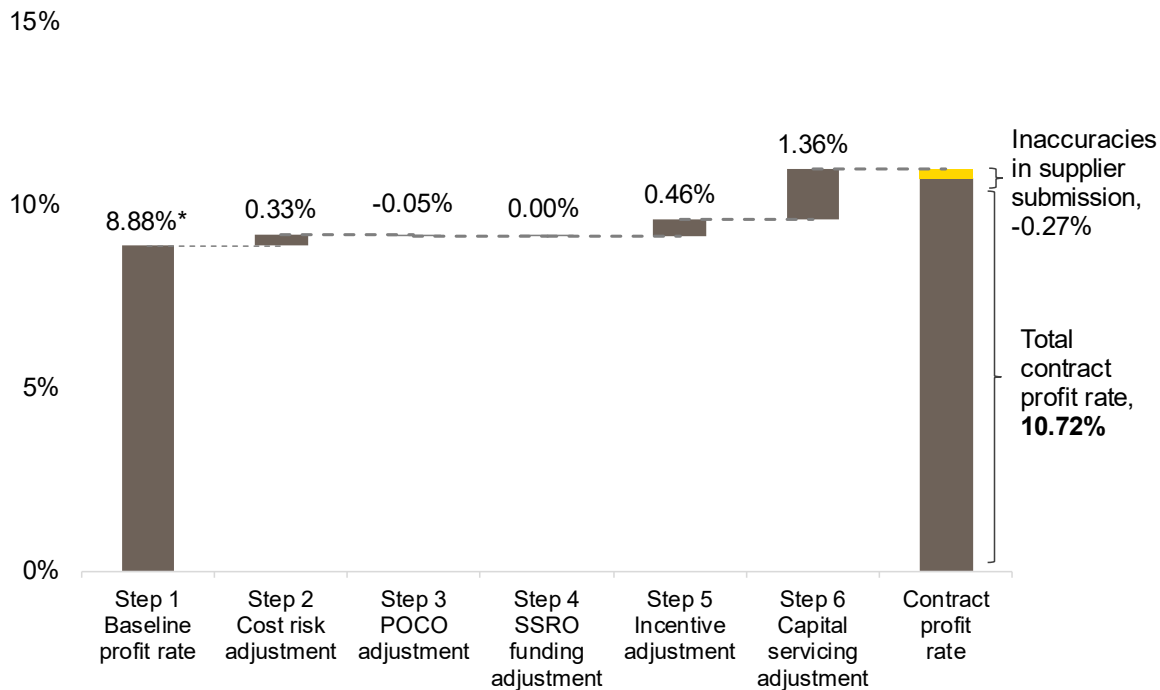
Figure 8: Average (mean) profit rate steps agreed at date contract became a QDC/QSC, for 2015/16 QDCs



*Note: Some QDCs/QSCs had reported a baseline profit rate that differed from the rate set by the Secretary of State (usually where a profit rate includes sunk costs, before the BPR was set), which is why this figure does not show 10.60 per cent.

4 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599881/SSRO_Guidance_on_the_baseline_profit_rate_and_its_adjustment_2017-18.pdf

Figure 9: Average (mean) profit rate steps agreed at date contract became a QDC/QSC, for 2016/17 QDCs



* Note: Some QDCs/QSCs had reported a baseline profit rate that differed from the rate set by the Secretary of State (usually where a profit rate includes sunk costs, before the BPR was set), which is why this figure does not show 8.95 per cent.

The average contract profit rate fell by 0.85 percentage points in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs. During the same period the baseline profit rate set by the Secretary of State was reduced by 1.65 percentage points from 10.60 per cent to 8.95 per cent. Whilst the baseline profit rate is a fixed rate set by the Secretary of State each year, some QDCs/QSCs had reported a different rate to this, usually as the result of reporting an average of two or more rates, for example where sunk costs are included in the reports. Because of this, the average difference in the reported BPR between 2015/16 contracts and 2016/17 contracts was 1.69 percentage points.

On average, the POCO adjustment increased by 0.30 percentage points, the incentive adjustment increased by 0.16 percentage points, and the capital servicing adjustment increased by 0.11 percentage points in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs, partially mitigating the impact in the fall of the baseline profit rate. Whilst the average cost risk adjustment reduced by 0.05 percentage points, this adjustment is restricted to +/- 25 per cent of the baseline profit rate, which had also reduced. The mean contract profit rate across all 88 QDCs/QSCs in both financial years was 11.05 per cent.

The most significant factor in determining a QDC's/QSC's contract profit rate was the baseline profit rate, although its impact had reduced in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16, as evidenced in Figure 10 below. The second most significant adjustment was the capital servicing adjustment, which aims to ensure that the primary contractor receives an appropriate and reasonable return on the fixed and working capital they employ in contract delivery.

Figure 10: The contribution of each profit rate step towards the average contract profit rate⁵

2015/16	Profit rate step	2016/17
91%	Baseline profit rate	83%
3%	Cost risk adjustment	3%
-3%	Profit-on-cost-once-adjustment	0%
0%	SSRO funding adjustment	0%
3%	Incentive adjustment	4%
11%	Capital servicing adjustment	13%
-5%	Other (reporting issues)	-3%
100%	Contract Profit Rate	100%

Table 2 shows the how many QDCs/QSCs reported contract profit rates above or below the baseline profit rate for the relevant year, amongst the 88 QDCs/QSCs analysed. In 2015/16, seven out of 34 QDCs/QSCs received a contract profit rate that is lower than the baseline profit rate (21 per cent). In 2016/17, this reduced to six QDCs/QSCs out of 54 (11 per cent).

Table 2: Number of QDCs/QSCs that have reported an estimated contract profit rate above/below the baseline profit rate

	QDCs where the CPR is equal to or above the BPR		QDCs where the CPR is below the BPR	
	#	%	#	%
2015/16	27	79	7	21
2016/17	48	89	6	11
Total	75	85	13	15

Figure 11 below shows the maximum, minimum and median values reported for each of the profit rate adjustments (excluding the BPR and SSRO funding adjustment, which are fixed values), and the contract profit rate, for each year. In 2015/16, the POCO adjustment had the widest range of reported values (between zero and +9.0 percentage points), but this reduced to the narrowest range in 2016/17 (between zero and +1.0 percentage points). In 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs, the profit step with the widest range was the cost risk adjustment (between -2.2 percentage points and +2.2 percentage points).

As mentioned previously, the reduction in the range of the cost risk adjustment in 2016/17 contracts may be due to a reduction in the baseline profit rate, as the risk adjustment is restricted to within +/- 25 per cent of the baseline profit rate. The profit rate data is as reported by contractors, with no adjustments made for known data errors.

⁵ The 'other' row relates mostly to data quality issues, where the reported profit rate steps do not sum to the total contract profit rate reported by contractors.

Figure 11: Maximum, minimum and median values of profit rate steps reported in individual QDCs/QSCs

Not all contracts receive an adjustment for each of the profit rate steps. In particular, many contracts didn't report a POCO adjustment (where this adjustment is not applicable, for example), or an incentive adjustment. Table 3 below shows the number of QDCs/QSCs that reported a POCO and/or incentive adjustment. In 2016/17, the proportion of QDCs/QSCs reporting a POCO or incentive adjustment almost doubled, from 6 per cent to 11 per cent reporting a POCO adjustment, and from 12 per cent to 24 per cent reporting an incentive adjustment.

Table 3: Number of QDCs/QSCs that have reported POCO and/or incentive adjustments

	Total number of QDCs/QSCs	QDCs/QSCs with a POCO adjustment		QDCs/QSCs with an incentive adjustment	
		Number	%	Number	%
2015/16	34	2	6	4	12
2016/17	54	6	11	13	24
Total	88	8	9	17	19

Sub-contracts

Summary

- The total price of sub-contracts greater than £1 million reported to the SSRO decreased in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs to **£1,793 million**, compared to **£2,577 million** in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs.
- However, the number of sub-contracts greater than £1 million increased in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs to **165**, from **135** sub-contracts in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs.
- The number of sub-contracts with SMEs increased in the most recent year, from **nine** in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs to **25** in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs. As a proportion of total sub-contracts, it increased from **7** per cent in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs to **15** per cent in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs.
- The average price of a sub-contract with an SME was **£5.5 million**, compared to an average for sub-contracts with non-SMEs of **£15.7 million**.

The SSRO receives partial data on the supply chain involved in QDCs/QSCs, for the 20 highest value sub-contracts priced at £1 million or more in each QDC/QSC. The following analysis is based on available data, and as such does not represent the entirety of sub-contracts that are involved in the delivery of QDCs/QSCs. Please note that sub-contracts may contribute to more than one contract, and as such, the sub-contract price is not necessarily fully attributable to the QDC/QSC it has been reported against. The total sub-contract prices below may therefore overestimate the amount of sub-contracting occurring in some QDCs/QSCs.

There were 300 sub-contracts reported to the SSRO, 135 in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs, and 165 in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs, with a value greater than £1 million. The proportion of these sub-contracts that were with SMEs increased in the most recent year, from 7 per cent in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs to 15 per cent in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs. In total, there were 34 sub-contracts with SMEs (9 in 2015/16 QDCs/QSCs, 25 in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs).

Figure 12 below shows the total reported price of all reported sub-contracts, by financial year. The total value of sub-contracts decreased by 30 per cent in 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs, although the total price of QDCs/QSCs also decreased by around 30 per cent, suggesting a similar level of sub-contracting in both years.

Figure 12: Total price of top 20 reported sub-contracts above £1 million, by financial year

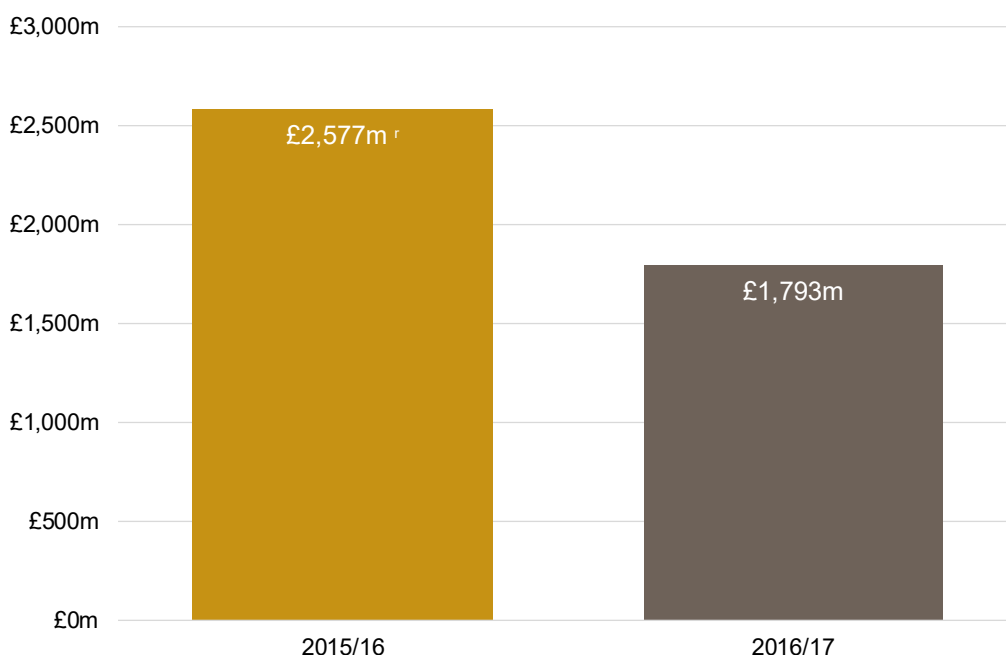


Figure 13 and Figure 14 show the number and price of sub-contracts split by price bands, for each financial year, respectively. Whilst the majority of sub-contracts tended to be lower value (between £0 to £10 million), a number of large value sub-contracts composed the majority of the total sub-contract price. In 2016/17 QDCs/QSCs, the mean sub-contract price was £11 million, a 43 per cent decrease from 2015/16, where the average was £19 million.

Figure 13: Number of top 20 sub-contracts above £1 million, by price band and financial year

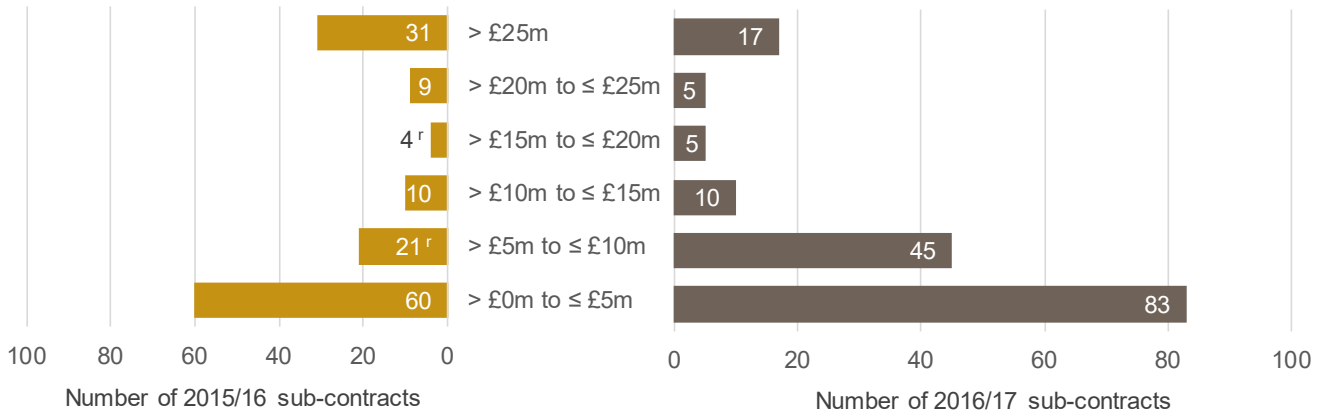
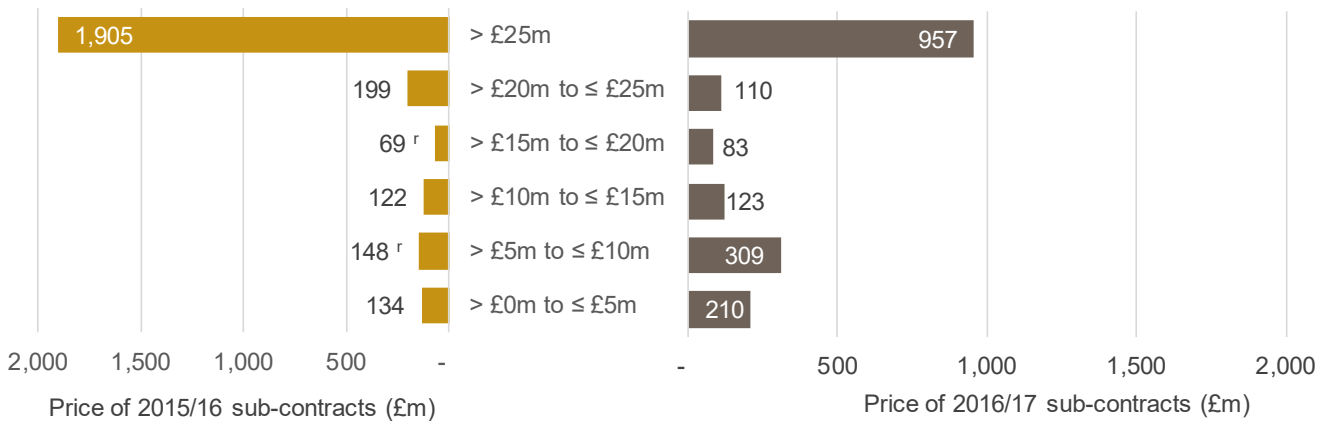


Figure 14: Total estimated price of top 20 sub-contracts above £1 million, by price band and financial year



Data Sources and Methodology

Data sources

The data in this report is sourced from a number of different contract reports submitted to the SSRO by contractors:

- The contract pricing and duration data in this report is sourced from the latest of the Contract Pricing Statement, Contract Notification Report, Quarterly Contract Report, Interim Contract Report or Contract Completion Report.
- The sub-contract data is sourced from the latest of the Contract Notification Report, Quarterly Contract Report, Interim Contract Report or Contract Completion Report.
- The contract profit rate data is sourced from the latest available Contract Pricing Statement only.

Because the data is sourced from a number of different reports, the contract profit rate statistics reflect the agreed position at the date the contract became a QDC/QSC, while the contract price, sub-contracts and duration statistics reflect the latest agreed position. The user guide for these reports are available on the SSRO's website⁶. Data from these reports are collated in the Defence Contract Analysis and Reporting System (DefCARS).

Time series data is reported using the date a contract became a QDC/QSC (the initial reporting date⁷) and defence contractors are required to submit their initial contract reports within a month of this date. Only contracts which became QDCs/QSCs on or before 31 March 2017 have been included in this release.

Data revisions

The contract prices and profit rates reported are those used for contract pricing purposes, and may not reflect the final value or profit rate of the contract once it is completed. All figures are provisional, and may be updated in future statistical releases. Data may also be revised where report submissions were late, and were not included in previous releases, or where suppliers have provided corrected reports with updated data. Where data is revised from a previously published statistic, the figure will be indicated with an 'r'. Totals are calculated on unrounded figures, before being rounded for presentational purposes.

Adjustments to data

All data is as reported by defence contractors, except in some circumstances where there are known, and significant, data quality issues. In some circumstances where there are issues, the data has been amended to ensure the statistics are not misleading. In summary, the following adjustments were made in a small number of cases:

- some dates the contract became a QDC/QSC were amended, if the reported date fell within a different financial year to the known date the contract became a QDC/QSC;
- some contract/sub-contract prices were amended, for example where these were reported in different units or currency;
- some sub-contracts were excluded from the analysis, where there are outstanding queries about their validity as sub-contracts; and
- where the latest contract report did not provide the required data, a previous contract report was used if that did contain the relevant data.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contract-and-supplier-reporting-defcars-and-associated-guidance>

⁷ Either the date the contract was entered into, or if it is a QDC/QSC by amendment, the date of the amendment.

Contractors were previously able to submit contract and sub-contract values in currencies other than pounds sterling. Where this has occurred, values are converted into pound sterling using the exchange rates published by the Bank of England as of the first day of the month in which the contract became a QDC/QSC. Previous statistical bulletins used the first day of the month in which a report was first submitted for the QDC/QSC, and so figures may be different to previously reported.

Definitions and clarifications

The 'time of agreement' is either the date in which a QDC/QSC is entered into, the date of an amendment if it is a QDC/QSC by amendment, or if the price payable is re-determined, the date of that redetermination.

The estimated contract duration is the difference between the date the contract became a QDC/QSC (either the date the contract was entered into, or if it is a QDC/QSC by amendment, the date of the amendment), and the estimated contract completion date. This is a different definition to that used in the 'Planned contract duration reported in Qualifying Defence Contracts 2015/16' SSRO bulletin, due to an update in the SSRO's methodology. Therefore, these figures are not comparable.

The SME status of a contractor or sub-contractor uses data as submitted by the contractors themselves.

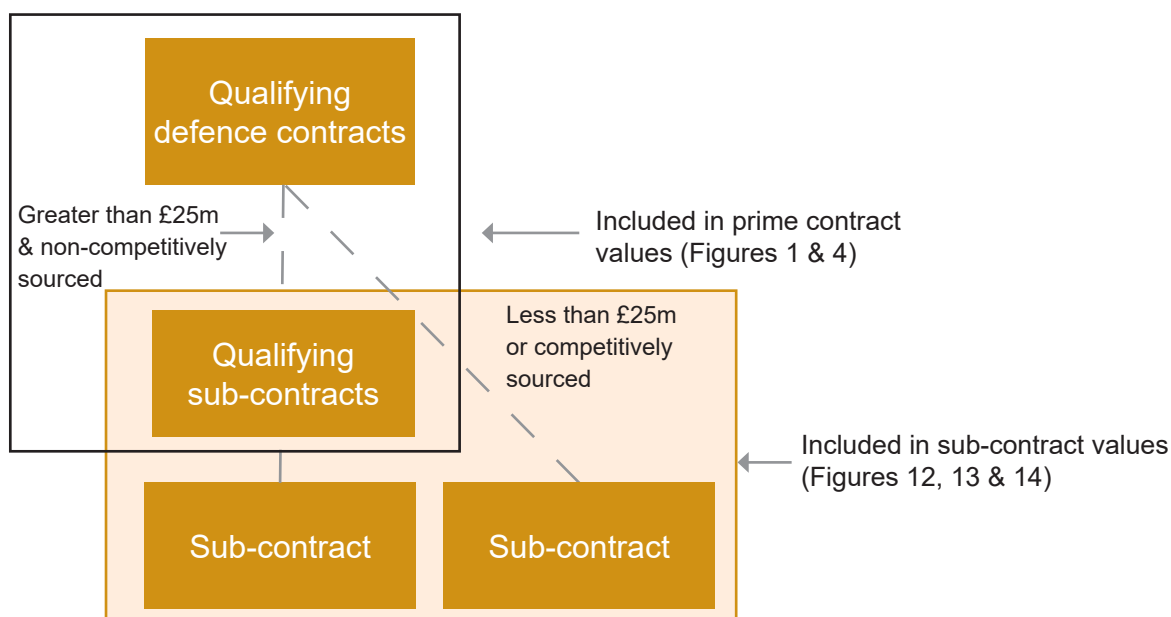
The Defence Reform Act 2014 (the Act) requires that the price payable under a QDC/QSC must be determined in accordance with the formula: $\text{price} = (\text{CPR} \times \text{AC}) + \text{AC}$. CPR is the contract profit rate for the contract and AC is the Allowable Costs under the contract. When agreeing the contract profit rate, contractors and the MOD must follow a six-step process set out in section 17(2) of the Act and Regulation 11 of the Single Source Contract Regulations 2014 (the Regulations).

The average contract profit rates are an arithmetic mean of the reported contract profit rates reported by QDCs/QSCs within that financial year. Where an adjustment does not apply (as is the case with the POCO adjustment for many QDC/QSCs), this is treated as a zero in the calculations. Average contract duration is an average of all QDCs/QSCs within that financial year. Averages over the year to date are used for these statistics to preserve anonymity, and are less prone to data suppression.

Contractors are required to submit the expected value of the sub-contract agreed for pricing purposes, including any options or incentive payments, which may not reflect the actual value at the end of the contract. Only the highest value 20 sub-contracts with a value over £1 million need to be reported to the SSRO. However, some contractors provide details of sub-contracts below £1 million.

A QDC is a non-competitively procured defence contract with a value of £5 million or more. If a sub-contract of a QDC is also awarded without competition, and has a value of more than £25 million, it becomes a QSC. For the purposes of this analysis, the QSC itself is reported as a sub-contract to a QDC and the sub-contracts within a QSC are also reported (see Figure 15 for an overview of how QSCs are treated in this analysis).

Figure 15: Diagram showing how QDC, QSC and sub-contracts have been treated in the analysis



Commercial sensitivity

Due to the commercial sensitivity of this data, the SSRO does not release any information that will enable identification of individual QDCs/contracts or contractors included within the analysis. Where publication of a low number of QDCs/QSCs within a particular data point may risk anonymity, this is suppressed, denoted by a “*”. Data relating to the number of QDCs/QSCs is not suppressed, as this does not risk disclosure of identifiable information.

For more information on the SSRO’s handling of commercially sensitive information, see the SSRO’s statement on its website⁸.

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Further information

The SSRO welcomes any queries or feedback you may have on this statistical release. If you would like to get in touch, please email us at helpdesk@ssro.gov.uk.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/handling-commercially-sensitive-information>