



Social Value 2032: Law & Regulation

Key points from Roundtable discussion

1. Education and training on existing social value rules still a priority

Although it was agreed that significant progress had been made in the implementation of social value, participants noted that there was still a lot of work to do to train and upskill public and private sector procurement teams on the effective use of social value. The Crown Commercial Service has trained over 4,000 buyers on social value in the past 18 months, for example, but there was still a challenge in implementing social value effectively.

2. Transparency and accountability as important as the law

In the public sector, it was noted that measures to increase transparency and accountability amongst public bodies and their leadership can be more effective than legal or regulatory change in isolation. Where possible, encouraging public bodies to publish information on social value and the progress that they are making can be more effective than legislation and regulatory changes, which can be lost implementation.

3. Danger of a “checklist culture” in implementing social value

Participants repeatedly discussed the lack of flexibility in the deployment of social value and a “checklist culture” rather than using the flexibility of the Social Value Act which allows for a range of approaches to implementing social value and measuring it.

There was concern that further legislative or regulatory change could create additional burdens on the public and private sectors, particularly as social value is not evenly understood across these sectors.

Any reforms to the law or regulation would need to be done sensitively to ensure that disproportionate burdens were not created, and so as not to confuse organisations which are only now starting to catch up with the developments in social value.

4. Social value needs to keep pace with changing policy landscape

There was agreement that there had been a significant amount of change in public policy since the Act was introduced from HM Government’s commitment to Net Zero by 2050 to the mission to “level up” the country and reduce regional inequality.

It is important that social value is repositioned within this policy landscape so that it remains a priority for public and private sectors.

5. Law and regulation less of a barrier to private sector compared to public sector

Participants noted the interest within some firms in the private sector to maximise the social and environmental impact of their spend, and that, once there was leadership and willingness to take this approach, it was relatively easy to implement changes. By contrast, in the public sector there was still caution given the significant amount of legislation that

governs public procurement. Legal and regulatory change may, therefore, have an impact on the public sector, but not on the wider private sector.

There are, however, global initiatives taking place to encourage companies to publish their impact in their financial accounts, so there may be private sector initiatives that social value can play a role within.