



Transforming Local Infrastructure Purchasing Cluster

Case Study Unpicking contracts workshop

By Maria Winnall, Purchasing Cluster Lead



“Since the TLI project began I've heard countless horror stories of voluntary organisations being hauled over hot coals because they've misread or misinterpreted a contract.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, due to the nature of the work we do, voluntary sector staff are always shocked by the ruthlessness of companies when penalising organisations that want to make changes to a contract or service level agreement.

“While we can't change the way companies manage and implement their contracts, TLI provided the perfect opportunity to help a few voluntary organisations avoid their own horror stories in future... and potentially save money is doing so.

“We approached one of our new partners, Higgs & Sons Solicitors, who accepted the challenge to help the sector 'wise up' to managing contracts by agreeing to run a short seminar on the myths and reality of contracts.

“Jane Rudge and Mike George provided invaluable information and allayed some of the more common concerns from the sector, including having the confidence to question something in a contract you don't understand, and not committing to anything until you've read the small print.

“These seem like obvious tips now I'm writing them down in black and white but when the pressure's on to sign a contract having the courage of your convictions to proceed at a pace that's right for you is no mean feat.

“All the participants agreed that they had a better understanding of what to look out for when it comes to signing contracts at the end of the seminar. But don't take my word for it, read their comments!”

‘I learned the importance of reading the small print and not taking the salesperson's word for it without checking through the contract carefully. Another useful tip was to make sure you know the procedures for getting out of the contract as there is often a charge to cancel, even after the contract has run its course.’

‘The unpicking contracts workshop gave me a clearer understanding of what makes a contract legally binding. It's really important to make it clear to the company that you cannot accept the terms and conditions until you have read the documentation. Something else that really surprised me was that the right to cancel only applied to consumers and not businesses.’

