

About ProClass

What is ProClass? It is the English local government owned procurement classification standard.

Why was it introduced? To provide a more meaningful and consistent breakdown on local authority third party expenditure using a sensible hierarchy of headings that reflects what many councils commission and purchase. This also supports collaboration and shared contracting as it allows the comparison of third party expenditure information on a like for like basis between UK councils, sub-regions and regions using one common standard.

Who owns ProClass? ProClass is owned by English local authorities. The trademark is held by the Corporation of London on behalf of English local government.

Who manages ProClass? [Coding International Ltd.](#) (CIL) were awarded a contract in 2007 by the Regional Centres of Excellence (now defunct) to develop and maintain ProClass. CIL continue to manage ProClass even though the contract has expired.

The role that CIL take is to manage the ProClass classification, ensure that it is updated under strict version control and that mappings to coding systems such as UNSPSC, CPV and NSV are maintained to encourage consistency and accuracy. They host the ProClass website which provides access to the latest versions and background information such as case studies.

Does it cost No, it is free to use.

Who is using ProClass? A detailed survey carried out in Spring 2012 showed 75% of tier one English councils are using ProClass either uniquely or alongside an existing coding system. The figure was even higher in single tier authorities including London boroughs. A summary copy of the survey outcomes can be obtained [here](#).

What should I use ProClass for?

ProClass was designed for comparative analysis, sharing information and market intelligence. It is an essential aspect of local government's ability to collaborate.

ProClass should be applied if it is to be of maximum benefit to its users:

- In financial systems to provide a procurement classification as well as a financial classification
- In contracts registers so that the main services / products provided under the contract can be recorded
- In expenditure analysis tools so that information can be compared across a large number of authorities and potential category plans put in place
- In supplier portals to help companies / providers search for potential business opportunities

ProClass is not designed to support any of the following:

- Classification of suppliers by type, only what is bought from them
- Analysis into SMEs/BMEs and/or economic regeneration
- Supporting catalogue management content
- Replacing the need for financial coding (subjectives and objectives)

How does ProClass fit into the new 2014 National Procurement Strategy (NPS) for Local Government?

The NPS is overseen by a National Advisory Group (NAG) convened by the Local Government Association (LGA). The Group's goals are to:

- Influence, shape and lead national procurement policy, so this works for councils and their local partners
- Identify and share good practice to maximise the benefits of good procurement, as well as communicate and support local government colleagues to adopt any good practice identified
- Highlight the role of procurement in supporting wider policies, improvements and efficiency savings for the sector
- Identify blockers to efficient and collaborative procurement and how these might be resolved
- Take account of procurement's role in relation to new groups and bodies such as clinical commissioners, and new initiatives such as commercialism
- Identify, influence and improve access to procurement related training to local government

ProClass is a major enabler to achieving these goals as well as helping local councils make the 2014 strategy a reality.

Version Control

Is ProClass under version control?

Yes. A new release comes out around once a year following a consultation process. You can get the latest version from the [ProClass website](#).

Are standard mappings from ProClass to other coding systems available?

Yes, there are mappings to UNSPSC, CPV, NHS-eClass, NSV, and Thomson on the [ProClass website](#). They can be downloaded at no cost.

There are also full mappings from UNSPSC and CPV to ProClass. Please contact CIL for more information.

Why is keeping up-to-date with the latest version of ProClass so important?

It is for two reasons. Firstly, if local authorities want to collaborate and compare information it is important that they are using the same versions, otherwise inconsistencies start to appear. The second reason is that ProClass is well used within local authorities and is regularly updated, so if you are using a version earlier than 10.2, you will not have the coverage or accuracy of those organisations using the latest version and mappings to other coding systems will not be useable.

I have found some potential gaps in ProClass, how can I get them considered for incorporation in the official version?

There will be potential enhancements as the user base and level of category expertise continues to grow in local authorities and emergency services. Ideas and suggestions for filling gaps or making improvements are really welcome from public and private sector organisations alike. There is a [user forum](#) for tabling these ideas alternatively you can email info@proclass.org.uk.

We are using a 'bespoked' version of ProClass provided by one of our service providers, does this matter?

Yes it does matter as you will be out of step with the many other authorities using the official versions. It will also hinder your ability to compare and collaborate with those authorities as they will have more accurate and up to date information. You will also find it difficult to compare information between solutions provided by third party service providers and your internal systems.

You need to contact the organisation that has supplied you with your own version and ask them to switch you to an official version (preferably the latest). Also draw their attention to the fact that the official version is a complete and local government driven reflection of its spend profile.

Technical Issues

Why do I need ProClass in my financial system as I already have a financial coding system based on CIPFA?

CIPFA financial categories are set up to report on spending against projects, assets or activities. Procurement classification allows you to break this down further and report on what money was spent on and who with. For example, financial coding will tell you how much was spent on your ICT outsourcing arrangement, whereas procurement classification will allow this to be broken down by hardware, software, maintenance, consultancy communications etc. In summary, they serve different business purposes and analysis requirements.

Procurement classifications do not replace financial classifications.

Is there a standard CIPFA subjective list to ProClass mapping?

No. This is because no two local authorities use the same subjective listing. It is a straightforward task to map a local authority's subjectives to ProClass as relatively few subjectives are used and they remain consistent year on year.

Why not adopt just adopt UNSPSC or a modified version of it?

UNSPSC is a coding structure of manufacturing origin with 60,000+ codes. This means that it is not suitable because it is:

- Not reflective of the local government expenditure profile
- Far too big and complex for analysis and collaboration purposes
- Difficult to change and adapt (it is owned by the United Nations)
- Added to by organisations worldwide, with widely different requirements

A modified or cut down version of it would be bespoke to the organisation using it so also would not support collaborative working.

When is the best time to apply ProClass to my financial data?

Ideally, at source – when letting a contract or placing an order in the financial system (real time) However, it can also be applied retrospectively, often at the payment stage or through a cross-referencing exercise to analyse historical spend at the end of the financial year. There are two technical papers available which provide more detailed advice that can be downloaded [here](#).

Where can I find out the latest on ProClass?

At the [ProClass website](#). Also at the ProClass [discussion forum](#). [Register](#) for information on updates.