

Managing Contractor Risk in the Facilities Management Supply Chain

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Facilities management organisations are increasingly responsible for managing complex supply chains that can include hundreds, or even thousands, of contractors operating across multiple sites and disciplines. From electrical maintenance and cleaning services to specialist access, fire safety and construction-related works, ensuring every supplier is competent and compliant has become a significant challenge.

The consequences of getting it wrong can be severe. Poor contractor management can result in accidents, project delays, enforcement action, reputational damage and increased legal liability. As organisations continue to focus on compliance, operational resilience and building safety, contractor competence has become a key component of effective risk management.

One of the greatest challenges for facilities managers is maintaining consistency. Suppliers often arrive with differing levels of documentation, varying assessment standards and multiple accreditation schemes. Verifying that every contractor meets an acceptable level of occupational health and safety competence can be both time-consuming and resource-intensive.

This is where a structured approach to supplier assurance becomes invaluable. Rather than assessing every supplier from scratch, many organisations are turning to recognised third-party assessment frameworks to provide independent verification of competence.

SSIP (Safety Schemes in Procurement) was established to address precisely this issue. Through its network of member schemes, SSIP provides a threshold standard (the “Core Criteria”) for assessing occupational health and safety competence, helping buyers make informed decisions when appointing contractors.

For facilities management providers, the benefits are significant. Suppliers assessed by an SSIP Member

Schemes have already undergone an independent review against recognised criteria. This reduces the need for repeated assessments while providing confidence that core health and safety requirements have been met.

The value becomes even greater when managing large supply chains. With more than 90,000 suppliers available for verification through SSIP, facilities managers can quickly establish whether contractors have already demonstrated compliance, reducing administrative burdens and accelerating procurement processes.

Importantly, contractor assurance should not be viewed as a one-off exercise. Effective supply chain management requires ongoing monitoring, regular review and clear communication of expectations. While SSIP schemes provide an independent assessment of a contractor's health and safety competence and require annual renewal and reassessment, they do not monitor suppliers between assessment periods. SSIP schemes can support the contractor management process by helping organisations to establish a consistent baseline for supplier competence.

As regulatory expectations continue to evolve, facilities managers face increasing pressure to demonstrate due diligence in contractor selection and management. By adopting a recognised assessment standard and prioritising competence throughout the procurement process, organisations can reduce risk, improve efficiency and contribute to safer working environments for everyone involved.