



Procurement Guidance Note  
**PGN 01/16**  
(as amended)

# Licence to Practise Initiative for Electrical Workers

Reissued: 28 February 2017



## PROCUREMENT GUIDANCE NOTES

[Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy \(NIPPP\)](#) was approved by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002. In approving the policy, the Executive took the decision that legislation was not necessary to ensure that Departments, their Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Public Corporations complied with the policy. Instead, it considered that compliance could be achieved by means of administrative direction.

Procurement Guidance Notes (PGNs) are the administrative means by which Departments are advised of procurement policy and best practice developments. They apply to those bodies subject to NIPPP and also provide useful guidance for other public sector bodies.

PGNs are developed by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), in consultation with the Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs), and are subject to the approval of the Procurement Board.

Once endorsed by the Procurement Board, they are issued to the Departments for implementation and copied to CoPEs to develop, if necessary, underpinning procedures supporting the implementation of this guidance in their particular sector. PGNs are also published on the [Department of Finance \(DoF\) website](#).

**The following PGN was endorsed by the Procurement Board with effect from 03 February 2016 for use by those bodies subject to NIPPP.**

<b>Revision History</b>	
First issued as Procurement Guidance Note PGN 01/16	03 February 2016
Reissued to reflect the restructuring of the Northern Ireland Government departments	24 May 2016
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### **Definition of Terminology**

In the preparation of this guide, the term **contractor/supplier** has been used to denote an organisation that contracts directly with a Department, whether it is a supplier, a service provider or a construction contractor.

The term **Department** has been used to refer to those bodies subject to Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy including Departments, Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Public Corporations. A full list of such bodies is available in Annex A of the [Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy \(NIPPP\)](#).

## 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Electricity is an essential part of everyday life – so much so that the risks it poses can be forgotten. It is the major cause of accidental fires in UK homes. Each year, approximately 70 people are killed and 350,000 are seriously injured due to an electrical accident in the home. Many of these fatal incidents are the result of defective electrical fittings and improper wiring set ups.
- 1.2 Conversely, continuity of electrical supply is more important than ever. For example, in hospitals, there has been a substantial increase in the use of modern technologies – diagnostic equipment, intensive care, computer systems and bed-head services to name a few. The loss of supplies to these services would be unacceptable, and most hospitals would be unable to function without electrical supplies. This is equally true of other Government facilities such as offices, prisons, schools and infrastructure networks including rail, road and water.
- 1.3 Therefore it is important for Government to ensure that electrical installations in its construction contracts are safe and that they are fit for purpose. The best way to achieve this is to ensure that these installations have been installed by competent personnel<sup>1</sup>. This is the fundamental objective of the Licence to Practise Initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> Contracting Authorities/Departments should also consider including a contractual requirement that a contractor carrying out electrical installation holds and maintains 3rd party certification of its quality management system for electrical installation work. The 3rd party scheme that the contractor is registered with must be certified to ISO/IEC 17065 for electrical work within the scope of BS7671 or equivalent, accredited through a National Accreditation Body and with a focus on the sector, type and scale of the electrical installation works to be executed. Examples of 3rd party certification schemes suitable for a range of electrical installation work include the Certsure LLP NICEIC scheme, the Electrical Contractor's Association's certification scheme, the NAPIT scheme or equivalent.

## **2 OBJECTIVES OF THE LICENCE TO PRACTISE INITIATIVE**

- 2.1 The Licence to Practise (LtP) Initiative is the first of its kind in the UK. It has been developed to prevent unqualified operatives describing themselves as electricians and also to improve electrical safety standards. It aims to drive up standards across the local electrical contracting industry and, in doing so, enhance the professional reputation of qualified and experienced electricians.
- 2.2 The Initiative requires that only licensed electricians and workers are employed to undertake electrical installation work on behalf of Government Clients. This will be achieved by requiring that electrical workers employed on Government construction contracts must register online with a Licence to Practise system, such as SparkSafe<sup>2</sup> or an equivalent system. The online registration will require disclosure of the individual's electrical qualifications, skills and experience.
- 2.3 The LtP system enables the Government Client, its Project Managers and the main contractor to have oversight of the number and qualifications of electricians that are working on each of its projects. This approach seeks to ensure that the electrical workforce, operating on site, holds the appropriate balance of skills, experience and resource necessary to deliver the electrical works in a competent manner.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Section 4.1 for further details regarding SparkSafe. Currently registration with a recognised LtP system is not required at the PQQ or Invitation to Tender (ITT) stages but is required after contract award and before commencing any electrical installation work on site.

## PART A – GUIDANCE FOR DEPARTMENTS

### 3 APPLICATION ON SUITABLE PROJECTS

- 3.1 The LtP Initiative will apply to all appropriate Government construction contracts from 1 February 2016. Requirements that the main contractor, electrical subcontractor and electrical workers register with an LtP System for the project should be included in procurement and contract documentation issued after that date.
- 3.2 It is recognised that some Government projects<sup>3</sup> may not be appropriate for the inclusion of this requirement. For example, a project that does not involve any electrical work is obviously unsuitable. Similarly, sector schemes adhered to by some Centres of Procurement Expertise, such as the National Highways sector schemes followed by TransportNI, may obviate the requirement for the inclusion of an LtP system in those contracts.

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<sup>3</sup> It is recognised that projects involving security facilities (for example, prisons, police stations, etc) may need to be handled carefully when applying the Initiative. This is to protect the interests of the personnel safety of those electrical firms and workers operating on those sites. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the information that is uploaded to the LtP system regarding the specifics of the project.

## 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A LICENCE TO PRACTISE SYSTEM

### 4.1 SparkSafe

4.1.1 SparkSafe is an online LtP system administered by the Electrical Training Trust (ETT). It is deemed to satisfy Government requirements for an LtP system and how it should operate. Electrical firms can register with the system for an annual fee, while electrical workers pay a licence fee every three years. However, registration is free of charge for Government Clients and main contractors. Further details on SparkSafe can be found by visiting the ETT website at the following link: [SparkSafe](#)

4.1.2 A process map explaining how the system works including how firms and electricians register with SparkSafe is attached at Annex A.

### 4.2 Equivalent LtP systems

4.2.1 Although SparkSafe is one example of an LtP system, equivalent systems will be accepted by Government Clients. However, an equivalent system is expected to fulfil the following minimum requirements:

- a means of independently verifying, via third party assessment, the qualifications and experience of electrical workers seeking to register with it;
- issues licences to practise to electrical workers of a type/grade appropriate to their qualifications and experience;
- provides a secure<sup>4</sup> and efficient online database of these workers, whose qualifications and experience have been verified by third party assessment, and which is fully accessible by the Government Client and the main contractor;

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<sup>4</sup> The database must hold and handle information securely in accordance with all data protection legislation.



- enables electrical contractors to link the firm to its electrical workers on the system;
- identifies and links the main contractor, electrical subcontractor and each electrical worker working on the specific Government project(s), providing easily accessible reports on the balance of skills (via licence type/electrical grading) within the project;
- enables photographic identification via identity cards or via the online database; and
- enables generation of on line reports for main contractors and Government Clients.

4.2.2 The Joint Industry Training Board (JIB) operates an Electrotechnical Certification Scheme for electrical workers. While this Scheme is similar to an LTP System it does not, at the time of writing this guidance, fulfil the minimum requirements detailed above and is, therefore, not equivalent. However, SparkSafe has a working arrangement in place with JIB. This enables electrical workers registered with JIB's Scheme to take advantage of a streamlined assessment process when registering with SparkSafe.

## PART B – GUIDANCE FOR COPEs AND SUPPLIERS

### 5 IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS WITHIN PROCUREMENTS AND CONTRACTS

- 5.1 Departments should consult their construction Centre of Procurement Expertise when implementing an LtP System in their contracts. If the contract is suitable, the requirement should be highlighted to contractors at selection and award stage during the procurement process. It must also form part of the contract with the main contractor and be reflected in its subcontract, where appropriate, with the electrical subcontractor.
- 5.2 To facilitate this, standard wording that should be included in Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs), Invitation To Tender (ITT) and contract documentation is included at Annex A.
- 5.3 Some construction contracts can involve solely or mainly electrical works; for example, the installation of replacement lighting or fire detection systems. In these contracts an electrical contractor, which normally acts as an electrical subcontractor, may be appointed as the main contractor. In such circumstances the LtP requirement will be included in the main contract. However, the electrical contractor will be required to fulfil the roles, responsibilities and obligation identified under Section 6.3, which are attributed to the main contractor and the electrical subcontractor.
- 5.4 The requirements of the LtP system will also apply when an electrical subcontractor wishes to subcontract part or all of the electrical works. This arrangement will require the prior approval of the Project Manager. If accepted by the Project Manager, all electrical contractors/subcontractors and their workers who are operating on the project will be required to register with the LtP system.

## **6 OPERATING A LICENCE TO PRACTISE SYSTEM**

### **6.1 Roles and responsibilities**

When implementing an LtP system, it is critical that the Project Manager, main contractor, electrical subcontractor and electrical worker understand their roles and responsibilities. These should be described within the contract documentation and are detailed below.

### **6.2 Project Manager**

The Project Manager has the following responsibilities regarding the implementation and operation of the LtP system:

- advise the Government Client on the suitability of the contract for implementation of an LtP system.
- if suitable, notify suppliers of the requirement by including it in the PQQ, ITT, and contract documentation.
- create the project record on the LtP system and ensure the main contractor registers on the system, linking itself to the project.
- check that the main contractor has registered itself and ensured that the electrical subcontractor has registered itself and its electrical workers, operating on the project, with the system.
- consider and review the balance of qualifications, experience and resources of electrical workers that are to be deployed on site, and whether this is sufficient to deliver the electrical works to the required standard.
- monitor implementation of the requirement at monthly site progress meetings as a standing agenda item and by checking the online database.

### 6.3 Main Contractor

The main contractor has the following responsibilities regarding the implementation and operation of the LtP system:

- ensure that it registers<sup>5</sup> with the LtP system and links itself to the relevant project.
- ensure that the electrical subcontractor registers itself and its electrical workers operating on the project with the system.
- assign the electrical subcontractor to the project.
- provide a report to the Project Manager at monthly site progress meetings regarding registration with the system and the number of electrical workers and their licence type working on the project that month.
- carry out random inspections to verify that electrical workers on site are licensed to practise and report the findings of this to the Project Manager at monthly progress meetings. In addition, permit access to the site for the LtP system provider, upon its request, and assist it to undertake random inspections of electrical workers operating on the project.
- to take remedial action, if required to do so by the Project Manager, to address non compliance issues. This may concern the qualifications of electrical workers and/or the balance of skills, experience or resources of electrical workers operating on site and confirm to the Project Manager when the remedial action is complete.

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<sup>5</sup> Registration on the SparkSafe LtP System is free of charge for the main contractor.

## 6.4 Electrical Subcontractor

The electrical subcontractor has the following responsibilities regarding the implementation and operation of the LtP system:

- ensure that it registers<sup>6</sup> with the LtP system and that the main contractor assigns it to the project.
- ensure that it registers and makes connection with its electrical workers, operating on the project, within the system.
- provide information necessary to enable the main contractor to prepare its monthly report. This will be presented to the Project Manager at monthly site progress meetings. It will provide details of registration with the system and the number of electrical workers and their licence type working on the project that month.
- co-operate with, and ensure its staff co-operate with, representatives from the main contractor or LtP system provider that undertake random inspections. These are to verify that electrical workers operating on site are licensed to practise.
- take remedial action, if required to do so by the main contractor, to address non compliance issues. This may concern the qualifications of electrical workers and/or the balance of skills, experience or resources of electrical workers operating on site and confirm to the main contractor when the remedial action is complete.

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<sup>6</sup> The electrical subcontractor will be normally be charged a fee to register itself and each of its employees with the LtP system. The electrical subcontractor should ensure that these registration costs are included in its tender price to the main contractor.

## 6.5 Electrical Worker

The electrical worker has the following responsibilities regarding the implementation and operation of the LtP system:

- ensure that he/she provides their employer and/or the LtP system operator with details and evidence of their qualifications and experience as part of the registration process.
- accept connection requests from their employer and subsequently assigns themselves to the project.
- inform their employer and the LtP system provider of any changes to their qualifications that may affect their electrical licence type.
- co-operate with any random on site inspections that are undertaken by the main contractor or LtP system provider in terms of providing evidence of their identity and the firm that they work for.

## **7 MAKEUP OF THE ELECTRICAL WORKFORCE**

### **7.1 Skills and resources**

7.1.1 Operation of an LtP system will provide the Government Client/Project Manager with an overview of the electrical workforce operating on site, both in terms of the number of electricians and the mix of qualifications. This provides transparency for the Project Manager enabling him/her to examine whether the electrical subcontractor has adequately resourced the project.

7.1.2 It is recognised that different projects can vary greatly in terms of the complexity, scale and nature of the electrical installations. For example, the installation of high voltage electrical systems in a large healthcare project will normally require a more extensive electrical workforce than that which would be required for a small housing project. The balance of qualifications amongst the electrical workforce will also vary relative to these factors. The SparkSafe LtP system categorises electricians by three grades:

- Qualified Electrician;
- Restricted Electrical Worker; and
- Apprentice Electrician.

Further details of each are provided below.

## 7.2 Qualified Electrician

This licence type indicates that the worker is experienced, skilled and up to date with electrical qualifications. This licence type is intended for workers who possess approved current and legacy electrical installation qualifications.

To be eligible, applicants must have obtained:

- an NVQ Level 3 in Electrotechnical Services;

**or**

- a relevant industry approved legacy qualification. This will be applicable to those applicants who trained prior to the introduction of NVQs in 1999;

**and**

- the current BS7671 IEE Wiring Requirements qualification [Level 3 Award in Requirements for Electrical Installations BS7671: June 2008(2011)].

## 7.3 Restricted Electrical Worker

This licence type indicates that the worker is not fully qualified or up to date with the required electrical qualifications but nevertheless has the relevant skills and experience working in the electrical industry. It is aimed at a broad range of electrical workers. This includes graded labourers through to practising electricians who are not currently up to date with a BS7671 qualification and/or do not possess a current BS7671 IEE Wiring Requirements qualification [Level 3 Award in Requirements for Electrical Installations BS7671: June 2008(2011)].

## 7.4 Apprentice Electrician

This licence type indicates that the worker is working towards becoming fully qualified by means of an industry approved framework. To be eligible,



applicants must be registered as an apprentice on an industry approved apprenticeship framework. Applicants must also be working towards achieving the NVQ Level 3. Apprentices will be issued with a standard licence for all year groups.

## **7.5 Balance of skills and resources of electrical gangs**

The balance of skills within an electrical gang working on site is important. This will be informed by the complexity and value of the works. It will also be informed by other factors. For example, a construction programme which has been accelerated due to an emergency may require a large number of electrical workers to complete the works on time. Project Managers should, therefore, consider each project on a case by case basis when reviewing the composition of the electrical workforce. If there are obvious deficiencies in the make up of the electrical gang, for example the absence of any Qualified Electricians, the Project Manager should address this with the main contractor.

## **8 REPORTING AND VERIFICATION OF THE ELECTRICAL WORKFORCE**

### **8.1 Reporting**

8.1.1 Two weeks prior to the commencement of electrical works on site, the main contractor will be required to notify the Project Manager of the following:

- the name of the electrical subcontractor, if not already identified within the procurement documentation;
- details of the workforce of the electrical gang that will be assigned to the project. This will be limited to non personal information but will include the total headcount and the balance of skills/qualifications; that is, the number of Qualified Electricians, Restricted Electrical Workers and Apprentice Electricians that make up the electrical workforce;
- details of when the electrical works will commence on site if not identified within the main contractor's programme; and
- confirmation that the main contractor, electrical subcontractor and electrical workers are registered on the LtP system and linked to the project.

8.1.2 Thereafter, the main contractor will be required to provide a report to the Project Manager at each monthly site meeting which will include:

- progress of electrical works completed on site;
- the number of electricians working on site each month;
- confirmation that all electricians working on site are licensed to practise;
- details of any random inspections undertaken within the past month including the outcomes and any remedial action that is required; and
- confirmation of any changes to the headcount and composition of the electrical workforce, in terms of qualifications, from that originally identified.

## 8.2 Verification

8.2.1 It is important that implementation of the LtP requirement is monitored throughout the project. As part of this, the main contractor will be required to provide appropriate evidence to demonstrate compliance with the LtP requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, verification:

- via self-declaration by the main contractor;
- by carrying out onsite identification checks of electrical workers against records held in the LtP database;
- by facilitating random onsite inspections by the LtP system provider; and
- by reports extracted from the LtP system indicating the composition of the electrical workforce by LtP grade, etc.

8.2.2 The main contractor is to arrange access to the LtP system for the Government Client/Project Manager and its representatives to enable registration of projects and to check registration details for projects and electrical workers.

8.2.3 The main contractor is to co-operate with the Government Client's/Project Manager's requests for reporting information from the LtP system and allow access to the site to the Client and its representative's to carry out identification checks on any electrical workers deployed on site. The Client/Project Manager may ask the provider of the LtP system to carry out these checks on its behalf.

## 9 FURTHER INFORMATION

Any queries on this guide should be addressed to:

Construction Procurement Policy Branch 2

Central Procurement Directorate

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor East

Clare House

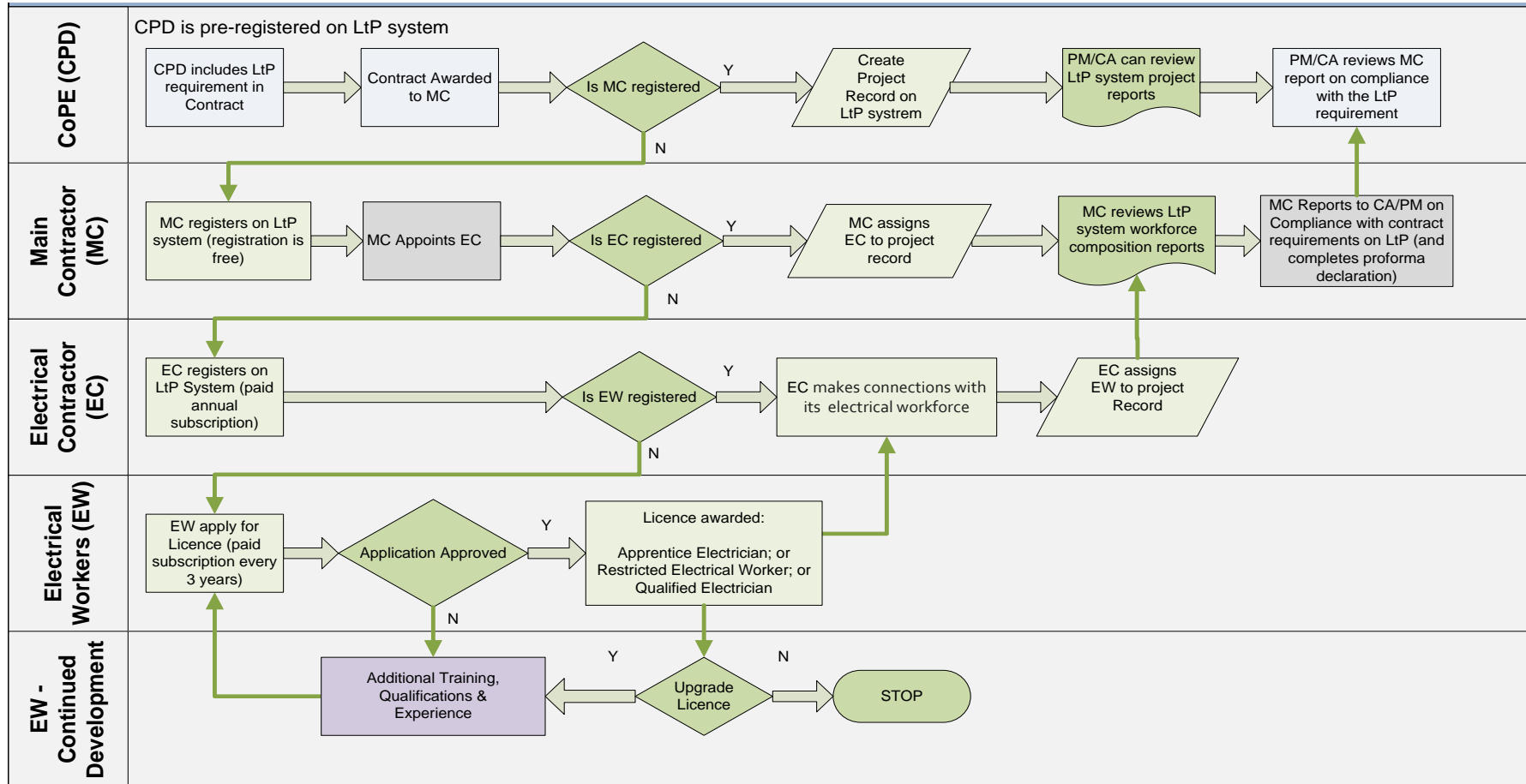
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## ANNEX A: LICENCE TO PRACTISE PROCESS FLOWCHART



**KEY - Flowchart shapes**



## **ANNEX B: SAMPLE WORDING FOR PQQ AND ITT DOCUMENTS**

### **B.1 SAMPLE WORDING FOR PQQ DOCUMENTS**

The following wording should be included in the PQQ documents where a project is to include a LtP requirement:

#### **Licence to Practise (LtP) Requirement for Electrical Workers**

The Contractor should note that this project may include a requirement for it to operate a LtP system in connection with all electrical work undertaken within the scope of the contract.

A LtP system provides an assessment, grading structure and registration process for electrical workers that is appropriate to their qualifications and experience. The LtP system enables contractors to demonstrate to Government Clients that they are employing appropriately qualified and experienced electrical workers on their construction projects. An example of a LtP system is SparkSafe (<https://www.SparkSafeltp.co.uk>). However, other LtP systems that are equivalent to SparkSafe will be accepted.

Further details of the requirement will be included within the Invitation To Tender (ITT) documents. However, the Contractor, if awarded the contract, will be required to:

- register with a LtP system;
- ensure that any subcontractor(s) undertaking electrical work is/are registered with the same LtP system;
- ensure that all electrical workers employed to undertake electrical work on the contract are licensed to practise. This will include monitoring of the requirement. It will also include facilitating and undertaking onsite identification checks of electrical workers and cross referencing this with information held on the LtP database; and

- report to the Project Manager, at monthly site/project meetings, that it is complying with the above requirements by providing appropriate evidence as necessary. This will include reports extracted from the LtP system indicating the composition of the electrical workforce by LtP grade.

## B.2 SAMPLE WORDING FOR ITT DOCUMENTS

The following wording is to be included in the ITT documents where a project is to include a LtP requirement:

### **Licence to Practise (LtP) Requirements for Electrical Workers**

The Contractor is required to operate a Licence to Practice (LtP) system in connection with all electrical work undertaken within the scope of the contract.

A LtP system provides an assessment, grading structure and registration process for electrical workers that is appropriate to their qualifications and experience. The LtP system enables contractors to demonstrate to Government Clients that they are employing appropriately qualified and experienced electrical workers on their construction projects. An example of a LtP system is SparkSafe (<https://www.SparkSafeltp.co.uk>). However, other LtP systems that are equivalent to SparkSafe will be accepted.

The Contractor, if awarded the contract, will be required to:

- register with a LtP system;
- ensure that any subcontractor(s) undertaking electrical work is/are registered with the same LtP system;
- ensure that all electrical workers employed to undertake electrical work on the contract are licensed to practise. This will include monitoring of the requirement. It will also include facilitating and undertaking onsite identification checks of electrical workers and cross referencing this with information held on the LtP database; and
- report to the Project Manager, at monthly site/project meetings, that it is complying with the above requirements by providing appropriate evidence as necessary. This will include reports extracted from the LtP system indicating the composition of the electrical workforce by LtP grade.



In summary, the actions and associated timeline are to be:

- within two weeks of contract award the Contractor is to register on the LtP system (the Contractor must be registered to enable the Project Manager to carry out the next step by creating a record of the project on the LtP system);
- when the Contractor has registered, the Project Manager will create a record of the project on the LtP system and is to link the Contractor to this record. [This is from the record of Contractors that have registered on the LtP system];
- the Contractor is to ensure its electrical workers and its electrical subcontractor(s) and their electrical workers are registered on the LtP system. The Contractor assigns its electrical workers and all subcontractors to the project record;
- the Contractor is to ensure that both it and all electrical subcontractors make connections on the system with their electrical workers. Individual electrical workers deployed on the projects are to be registered on the LtP system and are to co-operate to make connections on the system with their employer;
- the Contractor assigns and ensures all electrical subcontractor(s) assign electrical workers to the project record on the LtP system.

- within two weeks of electrical work commencing on site, the Contractor is to report to the Project Manager on the composition and grades of the electrical workforce that will work on the project. The Contractor will then report to the Project Manager, at monthly site/project meetings, that it is complying with the LtP requirements in the contract for electrical workers. It will provide appropriate evidence to demonstrate this which includes, but is not limited to, verification:
  - via self-declaration by the Contractor;
  - by carrying out onsite identification checks of electrical workers against records held in the LtP database;
  - by facilitating random onsite inspections by the LtP system provider; and
  - by reports, extracted from the LtP system, indicating the composition of the electrical workforce by LtP grade, etc

The Contractor is to arrange access to the LtP system for the Employer and its representatives to enable registration of projects and to check registration details for projects and electrical workers.

The Contractor is to co-operate with the Employer's requests for reporting information from the LtP system and allow access to the site to the Employer and its representative's to carry out identification checks on any electrical workers deployed onsite. The Employer may ask the provider of the LtP system to carry out these checks on its behalf.

The LtP system is to comply with data protection legislation and the data available to the Employer is to be configured to comply with data protection legislation.