

Modern Slavery Statement 2022/23

Introduction

Herefordshire Council is absolutely committed to using its powers, influence and responsibilities to prevent and act against modern slavery. This statement is made in relation to Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and explains the commitments of Herefordshire Council in its efforts to ensure there is no slavery or human trafficking within the organisation, its sub-contractors, partners or supply chains. It relates to the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Modern slavery has a devastating and long lasting impact on victims and is often a hidden crime undetected for years. Types of slavery include child trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and domestic servitude.

There is no typical victim of slavery. Victims are men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities and cut across the population. However it's normally more prevalent among the most vulnerable or within minority or socially excluded groups.

The fight against modern slavery is complex. There is the need to identify and support victims, safeguard individuals, bring perpetrators to justice, develop information and data flows, increase awareness and create long-term, sustainable changes to behaviours, practice, skills and expertise. No single agency can eradicate modern slavery alone and so it is vital that organisations collaborate and share information.

Key Facts

- 40.3 million people worldwide are in modern slavery.¹
- Around 10,000 people in the UK are in modern slavery, according to the UK Government. However some experts believe that this number is far higher - up to 136,000 people.
- Approximately 53% of victims in the UK are women, and 46% are men².
- In 2017, potential victims were reported from 116 different countries of origin. The top six most common countries of origin for potential victims were Albania, Vietnam, Nigeria, Romania, the UK and India.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places specific responsibilities on organisations to ensure slavery and human trafficking does not exist within its supply chain or in any part of its own business. Though some people may be more vulnerable to exploitation than others, it is not restricted by age, gender or background. The term 'modern slavery' captures a whole range of exploitation, which may occur together to have a combined effect on people's rights and liberty. These include, but are not limited to:

¹ Source: unseenuk.org

² Source: Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply

- **Child slavery** - in addition to forced child labour, this can involve child trafficking, forced marriage and child domestic servitude.
- **Criminal exploitation** - exploitation of a person to commit a crime or combination of crimes.
- **Domestic servitude** – enforced work in a private household, usually performing domestic chores and childcare duties.
- **Forced labour** – people forced to work long hours for little or no pay, in poor conditions and under threat of violence to themselves or their families.
- **Sexual exploitation** - including sexual abuse, forced prostitution and the production of child pornography.
- **Trafficking** - involving the transportation, recruitment, receipt or harbouring of people for purposes of exploitation using immoral means, including violence, threats, deception, coercion, abduction or bribery.

Herefordshire Council Commitment

Our commitment is that the people of Herefordshire will be free from slavery and exploitation, with Herefordshire Council committed to use its powers and influence to ensure modern slavery does not take place in the county.

- **Proactive** – we will improve awareness, understanding and identification of modern slavery with council staff and members being proactive in reporting suspected incidents.
- **Protect** – we will safeguard children and adults to not be at risk of modern slavery, and support victims with care and services.
- **Partnership** – we will work in partnership with other agencies, residents and businesses to address the causes and effects of modern slavery.
- **Providers** – we will create effective systems and controls to safeguard against any form of modern slavery taking place through the contracts we hold.
- **Prosecute** – we will work with agencies to gather evidence to hold perpetrators to account.
- **Policies** – we will have in place the policies and practices that enable the reporting of modern slavery and reduce the exploitation of people in the first place.

This commitment has been agreed by members of Herefordshire Council's Cabinet.

Activity within Herefordshire Council

Suppliers - As part of the procurement process, bidders are required to agree a statement relating to modern slavery based on suppliers and contractors understanding their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. All new council contracts and framework agreements include clauses which require suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in their own business, sub-contractors and supply chains. These clauses allow for the termination of the contract if breached.

Employment – As part of Herefordshire Council's robust and transparent recruitment process, all new workers recruited to the council have the requisite checks, which includes identification and right to work in the UK. Hoople as the council's recruitment agent will ensure checks are in place for council employees. Appointment will also be subject to receipt of satisfactory references with any necessary disclosures and evidence of any required professional qualifications (eg. social work qualifications). Any false statement will lead to enacting the disciplinary process.

Training and awareness– Guidance on recognising when someone could be a victim of modern slavery is provided to all members of staff and council members, with specific information given to officers to recognise the signs and be proactive to address it through safeguarding. Our

Environmental Health and Trading Standards team are particularly vigilant when carrying out investigations (eg. illegal tobacco gangs, rogue traders, housing inspections).

Equality - The council is committed to challenging discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. To this end the organisation has a programme of mandatory equality and diversity training for all officers and members and has introduced a training module on “unconscious bias” to support officers in key areas to have a better understanding and cultural awareness.

Partnership working - We always engage with partner agencies through the [Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement Strategy](#) (MATE) when we come across something that looks suspicious or raises concerns. As a matter of course, our Environmental Health and Trading Standards team will include Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority on planned enforcement operations locally. We work as part of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board to raise awareness and tackle modern slavery.

The Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) is a Home Office initiative. Herefordshire Council is an active member of the Herefordshire SOCJAG, and there are regular strategic and operational meetings to ensure there is a coordinated approach to tackling serious organised crime, one of which is Modern Slavery.

Council Policies

Policies that can support the council’s commitment to addressing modern slavery are:

- Whistleblowing Policy – enables staff and members to report wrong-doing within the council and its suppliers.
- Safeguarding – the welfare and care of children and vulnerable adults, with specific reference to the council’s role as a corporate parent.
- Equality Policy – the council is committed to equality and diversity, actively seeking to eradicate discrimination and inequality when delivering and commissioning services.
- Code of conduct – the council expects all employees to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and ethical behaviour along with standards for members.
- Fraud, bribery and corruption – The council has adopted policies and procedures to ensure there is full commitment to preventing fraud, bribery and corruption in the organisation.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Action 2015 and constitutes Herefordshire Council’s slavery and human trafficking statement for financial year ending 31 March 2023.

Signature

Chief Executive