

## Modern Slavery Statement 2020/21

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### Introduction

Herefordshire Council is absolutely committed to using its powers, influence and responsibilities to prevent and act against modern slavery. Modern slavery has a devastating and long lasting impact on victims and often a hidden crime undetected for years - this statement outlines the council's intentions, actions and policies that aim to address modern slavery.

### Modern Slavery

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, the following:

- **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.

### Statement

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.

This statement relates to actions and activities during the financial year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and will be reviewed annually.

**Suppliers** - as part of the procurement process bidders will be required to agree a statement relating to modern slavery based on suppliers and contractors understanding their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The council will build clauses regarding modern slavery into all new contracts and ensure clauses are included within framework agreements, allowing for the termination of the contract if these clauses are 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 (e.g. social work qualifications). Any false statement will lead to enacting the disciplinary process.

**Training** – guidance on recognising when someone could be a victim of modern slavery 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, trading standards, environmental health and contract monitoring.

**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.

**Awareness** – to support partners and members of the public to be aware of the signs of modern slavery that affect people of all ages and backgrounds. To raise awareness through our key partners and partnership including community safety and safeguarding boards. Awareness includes the reporting process.

**Reporting** – take responsibility for being proactive to encourage reporting cases of suspected modern slavery, including using the council’s whistleblowing policy in relation to the local authority’s practices or that of its suppliers. To be a regular feature of the Serious Organised Crime Action Group (SOCAG) as often linked to the work of that group.

### **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 and Diversity – 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<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

Signature.....

Chief Executive

## Modern Slavery Commitment

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For people in Herefordshire to 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** – improve awareness, understanding and identification of modern slavery with council staff and members being proactive in reporting suspected incidents.

**Protect** – safeguard children and adults to not be at risk of modern slavery, and support victims with care and services.

**Partnership** – to work in partnership with other agencies, residents and businesses to address the causes and effects of modern slavery on people.

**Providers** – create effective systems and controls to safeguard against any form of modern slavery taking place through the contracts we hold.

**Prosecute** – to work with agencies to gather evidence to hold perpetrators to account.

**Policies** – to have in place the policies and practices that enable the reporting of modern slavery and reduces the exploitation of people in the first place.

Signed by members of Herefordshire Council cabinet.