

# Modern Slavery Statement 2023/2024

Last Reviewed: 8 May 2024

## 1. Assurance statement

- 1.1 This statement demonstrates Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority's ('hereby known as 'the Authority') and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service's ('hereby known as 'the Service') ongoing commitment to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking within its business activities and supply chains by:
- Continuing to take action to embed a zero tolerance policy towards modern slavery and human trafficking.
  - Ensuring that effective systems and controls are in place to minimise the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking taking place.
  - Acting ethically and with integrity in all business relationships.
  - Ensuring the prevention, detection, and reporting of modern slavery and human trafficking is the responsibility of all employees.
  - Continuing to encourage employees to report any malpractice or wrongdoing in line with the Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy and Procedure.
- 1.2 The Authority and Service, have not, to their knowledge conducted business or business with any organisation, which has been found to be involved in modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 1.3 During 2023/2024 there were no reports received from:
- Employees, the public, or law enforcement agencies to indicate that modern slavery and human trafficking have been identified within business activities.
  - Within the supply chain to indicate that modern slavery and human trafficking have been identified.
- 1.4 For 2024/2025, the Authority and Service remain committed to reviewing policies, conducting training and due diligence to strengthen the approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking to protect the human rights of those employed by the Service and/or working within supply chains.
- 1.5 This statement complies with Section 54 of the Act for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.



Councillor Phil Tye



Peter Heath KFSM

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms and covers a wide range of exploitation including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. All of these have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another to exploit them for personal or commercial gain.
- 2.2 Victims of modern slavery can be any age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. They are misled or threatened into work and may feel unable to leave or report the crime through fear or intimidation. They also may not recognise themselves as a victim. A victim may also be subject to more than one type of exploitation at the same time.
- 2.3 The [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) (hereby known as 'the Act') was established to tackle these crimes and to provide law enforcement agencies with the powers to pursue and bring to justice criminal activity related to modern slavery. The Act aims to create more transparency throughout organisational supply chains to uncover modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 2.4 The Act consolidates slavery and trafficking offences, introduces tougher penalties and sentencing rules for offenders and provides more support for victims.
- 2.5 The Act requires certain organisations to make a public statement on the steps they have taken to identify and prevent modern slavery and human trafficking abuses in their operations and supply chains.
- 2.6 In support of this legislation, the Authority and the Service have produced this statement outlining the steps taken to mitigate the possibility of modern slavery and human trafficking occurring within business activities and the supply chains.

## **3. Period covered by this statement**

- 3.1 This statement covers the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and demonstrates effective systems and controls are in operation to safeguard against all forms of slavery, and arrangements are in place for concerns about modern slavery and human trafficking to be reported in accordance with the Act.
- 3.2 This statement sets out compliance with the requirements of Section 54 of the Act, which requires an organisation to demonstrate its commitment through the publication of a modern slavery statement. This statement is to be made public on the Service's [website](#) and the Government's online [modern slavery statement registry](#).

## **4. Corporate commitment**

- 4.1 The Authority and Service are committed to acting ethically and with integrity and transparency in their business dealings and have put effective systems and controls in place to safeguard against any form of modern slavery and human trafficking.

4.2 This statement sets out the practices in place to prevent, detect and report instances of modern slavery and human trafficking in support of the Act through:

- Conducting due diligence with suppliers and adopting responsible procurement practices.
- Regularly reviewing policies and risk assessment processes to strengthen approaches to preventing and detecting modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Providing training and awareness to employees to spot the signs of modern slavery and human trafficking and working in partnership with relevant agencies and groups to share intelligence and report instances of modern slavery.

## 5. Definitions

5.1 Modern slavery is an umbrella term, which encompasses slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. Modern slavery describes a situation where someone is forced to do something, and another person gains from this. This exploitation can take many different forms and can include:

- **Forced labour** – Victims are forced to work against their will, often working very long hours for little or no pay in dire conditions under verbal or physical threats of violence.
- **Debt bondage** – Victims are forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to.
- **Sexual exploitation** – Victims are forced to perform non-consensual or abusive sexual acts against their will, such as prostitution, escort work and pornography. Adults are coerced often under the threat of force or another penalty.
- **Criminal exploitation** – Often controlled and maltreated, victims are forced into crimes such as cannabis cultivation or pickpocketing against their will.
- **Domestic servitude** – Victims are forced to carry out housework and domestic chores in private households with little or no pay, restricted movement, very limited or no free time and minimal privacy often sleeping where they work.
- **Child trafficking** – Young people (under 18) are moved internationally or domestically so they can be exploited.
- **Organ harvesting** – Victims are trafficked to sell their body parts and organs for transplants.

## 6. Organisation covered by the statement

6.1 The Authority is the publicly accountable body that oversees the operational delivery of the Service on behalf of the communities of Tyne and Wear.

6.2 The Authority comprises of 17 elected members, 16 are appointed by the five constituent councils of Tyne and Wear (North Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland), in accordance with Schedule 10 of the [Local Government Act 1985](#).

- 6.3 The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria also joined the Authority in 2017. Further information about the purpose and function of the Authority can be viewed on the Service's website ([LINK TO GOVERNANCE PAGE](#)).
- 6.4 The Service in seeking to 'create the safest community' serves 1.1 million residents of Tyne and Wear. It employs 904 people and has 17 fire stations and other key sites strategically placed across Tyne and Wear to provide the most effective and efficient service to the residents of Tyne and Wear as well as those who work or visit the area.
- 6.5 The Service provides a diverse range of services including emergency response, prevention, protection and resilience activities. It delivers a range of community safety initiatives, including youth engagement, Safe and Well visits and home, road and water safety education alongside fire safety and enforcement activities. It is this work that targets those most at risk within the community and collaboration with partners maximises the effectiveness and efficiency of this service delivery.
- 6.6 This statement covers the Authority and Service activities, including all direct employees, agency workers, volunteers, supply chains and services commissioned.

## **7. Due diligence and risk management**

- 7.1 The Authority and Service are committed to the highest level of ethical standards and act with integrity in all business relationships by taking reasonable and practical steps to ensure compliance with the Act to mitigate the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking occurring within business activities and the supply chains. Further, recognise their responsibility to promote an understanding of modern slavery and human trafficking within the workforce, suppliers and the wider community.
- 7.2 The Service recognises that the supply chain presents the highest risk to its operations in relation to the Act. However, with effective systems and controls operating, the likelihood of modern slavery and human trafficking occurring in business activities and supply chains has been assessed as low. Policies and procedures supported by training and the implementation of an effective contract management framework for the procurement of goods and services further strengthen internal controls. The following sections of this statement provide further details of the controls in place.

## **8. Relevant policies and controls**

- 8.1 The Authority and Service are committed to meeting the aims of the Act and operate policies and procedures to ensure business is conducted ethically and transparently. These include:
- **Code of Conduct and Ethics** – guides employees on their conduct and the behaviours expected of them. The code sets out ethical principles and has a specific section on modern slavery. Public trust and confidence in the Service relies on employees demonstrating ethical behaviours.
  - **Counter Fraud Framework** – provides guidance on what to do if fraud or corruption is suspected and how fraud concerns will be dealt with by the Authority/Service including the investigation process and application of sanctions.
  - **Delegation Scheme** – is a reference document, which details what authority has been delegated to Service employees under the powers of its constitution.

- **Financial Regulations** – are a set of internal, locally approved policies and procedures to control financial processes within the Authority.
- **Procurement Policy** – complies with legislative requirements and promotes Professional Standards as set out in the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Corporate Code of Ethics.
- **Recruitment Policy** – aims to achieve a fair and consistent approach to recruitment and selection that eliminates discrimination and meets the Services commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The provisions of the policy comply with the current legal framework relating to recruitment and selection.
- **Safer Recruitment principles** – are applied in all cases, to establish an applicant's history are established, in addition to undertaking an appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check for relevant roles.
- **Safeguarding Policy** – details the roles and responsibilities of an employee regarding the safeguarding of adults and children who are suffering from, or are at risk of abuse and neglect. The Service adheres to the National Fire Chiefs Council Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People, and Adults in its policies, procedures, and training. This ensures children, young people and vulnerable adults are provided with a safe environment when visiting Service sites or when engaging with employees in the wider community.
- **Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy and Procedure** – encourages employees to report any concerns related to direct activities, or the supply chains. This includes any circumstances that may give rise to an enhanced risk of slavery or human trafficking. This policy and procedure is designed to make it easier for employees to make disclosures without fear or retaliation.

## 9. Supply chain

- 9.1 The Service spends around £13.4 million annually on the procurement of goods, services and works with a diverse range of suppliers. As a publicly funded body, must ensure money is spent effectively, delivering value for money and committed to ethical practices within its business activities and supply chains to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking from occurring.
- 9.2 The Service does not enter into business with any organisation in the UK or abroad, which knowingly supports or is found to be involved in modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 9.3 The Procurement team has achieved the CIPS Corporate Ethical Procurement and Supply status, a statement of the Service's commitment to ethical sourcing and supplier management. The Service is listed on the CIPS corporate ethics register and uses the corporate ethics mark to signal to suppliers, customers, potential employees and other stakeholders that it demonstrates ethical values in the way in which it sources and manages suppliers.
- 9.4 The Service ensures transparency in its purchasing decisions and practices, operates in a responsible, ethical and open way, and expects partners, contractors and suppliers that are subject to Section 54 of the Act to understand and comply with the requirements set out in the legislation. This is achieved by ensuring:

- Contract documents set clear guidance about compliance with modern slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes.
- An effective contract management framework identifies those high-risk areas of the supply chain, which may be at risk of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Standard terms and conditions mandate that the incumbent contractor comply with the Act. When the Authority's terms and conditions are not used, compliance with the Act will be a bespoke clause added to these individual contracts.
- For any non-contracted spend of low value, all purchase orders detail the standard terms and conditions of business.
- All standard tender documentation includes a mandatory pass/fail section relating to complying with the Act.
- Compliance with the Regulations on Public Sector Procurement.

## **10. Workforce**

- 10.1 The workforce of the Service is mainly employed on a permanent, (including retained) or temporary contract basis. Employees are all paid at or above minimum wage rates. For outsourced work, the process for selecting third party vendors includes due diligence checks for potential forced labour or other relevant ethical concerns.
- 10.2 The Safeguarding Manager oversees the Service's safeguarding arrangements and attends local safeguarding boards across Tyne and Wear (and their subgroups). Safeguarding is a key element of the Service's work and internal and external safeguarding processes ensure employees understand their responsibilities and can identify those at risk, and take action to avoid any further harm.
- 10.3 Employees work with external agencies such as social services, mental health teams, local authorities, housing associations and the police and attend meetings to stay aware of emerging modern slavery and human trafficking trends. The intelligence received through such networks helps strengthen the Service's capabilities to recognise risks in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 10.4 It is the responsibility of all employees to escalate concerns or signs of modern slavery or unethical behaviour within business activities or the supply chains. This can be done in several ways including reporting through the line management structure, via the Safeguarding Manager and/or Procurement Services Manager or through Whistleblowing arrangements.

### **Recruitment**

- 10.5 The Service's recruitment and people management processes are designed to ensure that all prospective employees are legally entitled to work in the UK and to safeguard employees from any abuse or coercion.
- 10.6 Prospective employees are subject to pre-employment checks, including the verification of their identity, references covering three years of continuous employment, eligibility to work in the UK and evidence of qualifications.

- 10.7 DBS checks are undertaken for relevant roles and the criteria of whether this is a Standard or Enhanced is based on the characteristics of the role.
- 10.8 Prospective employees must satisfy the following checks prior to appointment, which supports the Service to understand who they are employing and identify whether someone is connected to modern slavery related activities, as a perpetrator or victim.
- 10.9 Pre-employment checks conducted include:
- Proof of eligibility to work in the UK in accordance with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.
  - Declaration of any unspent convictions.
  - Reference checks covering three years of continuous employment.
  - Pre-employment Occupational Health Screening, which includes substance abuse testing.
  - Standard or Enhanced DBS checks for roles, which meet specific criteria.
- 10.10 Although the use of employment agencies to supply employees is the exception rather than the rule, the HR department continues to work with the Procurement team to ensure that any supplier has the necessary measures in place to ensure their responsibilities and compliance with the requirements of the Act.
- 10.11 Any employment agency will be checked to ensure the new requirement for temporary and permanent employees to have, as a minimum, a standard employment check in line with Service requirements.

#### Training and Awareness

- 10.12 The Service has a responsibility to ensure its employees, many of whom interact with the public as part of their duties are aware of the issues associated with modern slavery and human trafficking and can identify those at risk and make an appropriate referral.
- 10.13 Safeguarding training forms part of the induction process and is mandatory for all full time employees and volunteers. Additional (advanced) safeguarding training is provided to employees who engage directly with the community and/or have specific safeguarding responsibilities. This includes operational employees, Flexi Duty Officers, Fire Safety Officers/Auditors, Prevention and Education employees, and Control Room Operatives. Training is completed annually and includes procedures for the identification and reporting of any children or adults who are perceived to be vulnerable or at risk.
- 10.14 All employees complete mandatory modern slavery e-learning. The training aims to develop knowledge of how to spot the signs and indicators of exploitation, provides information and guidance on what to do when an employee encounters a potential victim and how to escalate concerns through the appropriate channels.
- 10.15 The Procurement team undertake continued professional development to expand their learning and participate in modern slavery and human trafficking training in supply chains, and complete the annual CIPS Ethical Procurement module and test.

- 10.16 All records pertaining to the completion of employee training are held in the learning management system which is overseen by the Learning and Development team.