



Modern Slavery Statement 2024/2025

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1. Assurance statement

- 1.1 Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) are committed to understanding and mitigating the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking within their business activities and supply chains. This is achieved by:
- Meeting our statutory responsibilities.
 - Implementing a zero tolerance policy toward modern slavery.
 - Establishing effective systems and controls to minimise the risk of modern slavery occurring.
 - Maintaining ethical, integrity driven business relationships.
 - Continuing partnership working with relevant agencies and groups.
 - Providing employee training in safeguarding, modern slavery and equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - Encouraging employees to report misconduct or wrongdoing in accordance with our Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy and Procedure.
 - Making the prevention, detection, and reporting of modern slavery and human trafficking the responsibility of all employees.
- 1.2 To keep the public and stakeholders informed, we publish an annual transparency statement that outlines the activities undertaken during the previous financial year to address modern slavery and human trafficking. This practice ensures our continued compliance with Section 54 of the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#).
- 1.3 This statement constitutes our modern slavery statement for the year ending 31 March 2025. In support of this, no reports were received from employees, the public, or law enforcement agencies indicating the presence of modern slavery or human trafficking within our business activities or supply chain.
- 1.4 For the year ahead we remain committed to reviewing our policies and procedures, conducting employee training, performing due diligence to strengthen our efforts against modern slavery and human trafficking, ensuring the protection of human rights for those employed by the Authority and for those working within our supply chains.



Councillor Phil Tye
Chair
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue
Authority



Peter Heath KFSM
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue
Service

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms, including slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. All of these practices share a common element: the deprivation of a person's liberty by another to exploit them for personal or commercial gain. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was introduced.
- 2.2 Victims of modern slavery can be of any age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. They may be misled or threatened into working and might feel unable to leave or report the crime due to fear or intimidation. Often, victims do not recognise themselves as such. Additionally, a victim may also experience multiple forms of exploitation simultaneously.
- 2.3 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 was established to combat these crimes and empower law enforcement agencies to pursue and prosecute criminal activities related to modern slavery. The Act aims to enhance transparency in organisational supply chains to uncover the presence of modern slavery and human trafficking. It consolidates various slavery and trafficking offences, introduces tougher penalties and sentencing rules for offenders and provides more support for victims.
- 2.4 In support of this legislation, this statement has been prepared to outline the steps taken to mitigate the possibility of modern slavery and human trafficking occurring within our business operations or through the supply chains.
- 2.5 We ensure that our employees are sufficiently trained to identify modern slavery risks when undertaking both procurement and frontline services. We educate them to spot signals of modern slavery as they perform their roles and work with partners and communities, and we support employees with any referral processes.
- 2.6 We will support job applicants with fair recruitment, pay, conditions and practices and our own employees with procurement, safeguarding and equality, diversity, and inclusion training and policies.

3. Period covered by this statement

- 3.1 This statement covers the financial year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It demonstrates that effective systems and controls are in place to safeguard against all forms of slavery, and there are arrangements in place for reporting concerns about modern slavery in alignment with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- 3.2 This statement complies with the requirements of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and will be made available on the www.twfire.gov.uk website and the Government's online [modern slavery statement registry](#).
- 3.3 This statement covers the activities and supply chains including all direct employees, agency workers, volunteers, supply chains and commissioned services.

4. Definitions of modern slavery

4.1 Modern slavery is an umbrella term that includes slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. It describes situations where an individual is coerced into doing something, against their will, leading to another person gaining from this exploitation. Forms of modern slavery include:

- **Forced labour** - Victims are forced to work against their will, often working long hours for little or no pay in dire conditions under threats of verbal or physical violence.
- **Debt bondage** - Victims are forced to work to repay debts that they are unlikely to ever fully pay off.
- **Sexual exploitation** - Victims are forced into performing non-consensual or abusive sexual acts against their will, such as prostitution, escort work and pornography. Victims are often coerced under threats of force or other penalties.
- **Criminal exploitation** - Victims are controlled and abused, forced into crimes such as cannabis cultivation or pickpocketing against their will.
- **Domestic servitude** - Victims are forced to perform housework and domestic chores in private households with little or no pay. Their movement is restricted, and they often have limited or no free time and minimal privacy, often sleeping where they work.
- **Child trafficking** – Victims are young people (under 18 years old) are transported both internationally and domestically for exploitation.
- **Organ harvesting** - Victims are trafficked for the sale of their body parts and organs for transplants.

5. Organisational structure and its supply chains

5.1 Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

5.1.1 The Authority is the publicly accountable body that oversees the delivery of fire and rescue services to 1.127 million residents of Tyne and Wear as well as those who work or visit the region. It delivers its services in accordance with the prevailing legislation, regulations and government guidance and that proper standards of stewardship, conduct, probity, and professional competence are set and adhered to by all those working for and with the Authority.

5.1.2 The Authority consists of 17 elected members, 16 of whom are appointed by the five constituent councils of Tyne and Wear: North Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland in accordance with the [Local Government Act 1985](#). Additionally, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria is a member of the Authority as per the provisions of the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).

5.2 Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

- 5.2.1 The Service has 904 employees and operates from 20 sites which includes 17 fire stations, our Service Headquarters and Brigade Training Centre, Technical Services Centre and Safetyworks!, our interactive education safety centre.
- 5.2.2 The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer, with the support of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), who has overall responsibility for the organisation's strategic direction, leadership and decision making and consider strategic issues, finance, and risk. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) provides day to day leadership and management for the Service, ensuring an effective working environment that supports the achievement of Service goals and priorities. SLT has delegated responsibility for developing and delivering against service plans, strategies, and budgets.
- 5.2.3 More information about the structure and governance of the Authority and the Service is available on our website at www.twfire.gov.uk.

5.3 Supply chains

- 5.3.1 The Authority spends approximately £7.7 million annually on procuring goods, services and works from a diverse range of suppliers. As a publicly funded body, it is committed to ensuring that all contracts for the supply of goods, services and works comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, UK legislation and the Authority's Contracts Standing Orders.
- 5.3.2 The Authority utilises public sector frameworks and/or releases opportunities to the market ensuring mandatory criteria and checks are undertaken prior to provision of service, goods or works.

6. **Organisational policies**

- 6.1 We have established policies and procedures to ensure business is conducted ethically and transparently. The following documents set out the standards required from employees and include details of the mechanisms in place which can be used to report concerns about modern slavery or human trafficking:

- **Code of Conduct and Ethics** - guidelines for employee conduct and expected behaviours which include ethical principles and a specific section on modern slavery. Public trust and confidence in the Authority rely on employees demonstrating ethical behaviours.
- **Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure** - ensures fair, prompt, and effective handling of both positive feedback and negative concerns from the public. It outlines the process for making a compliment or complaint, acknowledging and investigating, and reaching a resolution. It emphasises learning from feedback to improve processes.
- **Counter Fraud Framework** - guidance for handling suspected fraud or corruption, outlining the investigation process and the application of sanctions.

- **Delegation Scheme** - a reference document detailing the authority delegated to Authority employees under the powers of its constitution.
- **Financial Regulations** - a set of internal, locally approved policies and procedures governing financial processes within the Authority.
- **Inclusion Policy** - seeks to ensure compliance with the aims and requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. The policy supports employees, volunteers, visitors, contractors, service users and the public. It applies to policies, procedures and working practices and influences the nature, shape and delivery of our services.
- **Pay and Conditions Policy** – employee pay is determined by the Local Government Employers with the Employers’ Sides of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, the Middle Managers’ Negotiating Body, the NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, the Fire and Rescue Authority locally and representative bodies nationally. Pay awards are considered annually.
- **Procurement Policy** - compliance with legislative requirements while promoting the Professional Standards set out in the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Corporate Code of Ethics.
- **Recruitment Policy** - ensures a fair and consistent approach to recruitment and selection, eliminating discrimination and aligning our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The policy provision complies with the current legal framework regarding recruitment and selection.
- **Safer Recruitment Principles** - applied to verify an applicant’s history, which includes an appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for relevant roles.
- **Safeguarding Policy** - outlines the roles and responsibilities of employees regarding the safeguarding of both adults and children who may be experiencing or are at risk of abuse and neglect. The Service follows the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People, and Adults in its policies, procedures, and training, ensuring a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults while visiting Service sites or engaging with employees in the wider community.
- **Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy and Procedure** - encourages employees to report any concerns related to business activities, or the supply chain, including circumstances that may give rise to the risk of modern slavery. The policy and procedure is designed to make it easier for employees to make disclosures without fear or retaliation.

7. Assessing and managing risk

- 7.1 We seek to ensure that we do not inadvertently support modern slavery. High ethical standards and integrity in all business relationships are maintained and reasonable and practical steps are taken to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

- 7.2 The two principal areas of risk in relation to modern slavery relate to the supply chain and the recruitment of employees. However, with effective systems and controls in place, the likelihood of modern slavery occurring in our business activities and supply chains has been assessed as low. The steps taken to manage these risks are outlined in section 8 below.

8. Due diligence in relation to modern slavery

8.1 Supply chain

- 8.1.1 The Authority does not engage in business with any organisation, in the UK or abroad, that knowingly supports or is involved in modern slavery and human trafficking. It takes responsibility for ensuring that procurement governance and practices help identify and eliminate modern slavery while promoting fair pay and working conditions within supply chains.
- 8.1.2 The Procurement team has achieved the CIPS Corporate Ethical Procurement and Supply status, reflecting on our 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 its adherence to ethical conduct in procurement and supply management.
- 8.1.3 We ensure transparency in purchasing decisions and practices, by operating responsibly, and ethically. We expect partners, contractors and suppliers who are subject to Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to understand and comply with these requirements. This is achieved through:
- Contract documents that provide clear guidance on compliance with modern slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes.
 - Standard terms and conditions mandating compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 by the incumbent contractor. If the Authority's terms and conditions are not used, compliance with the Act will be included as a bespoke clause in 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 for compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
 - Adherence to the public sector regulations.

8.2 Recruitment

- 8.2.1 Our 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.
- 8.2.2 We primarily employ our workforce on a permanent, (including retained) and temporary contract basis. All employees are paid at or above minimum wage rates. When outsourcing work, the process for selecting third party vendors

includes due diligence checks for potential forced labour or other ethical concerns.

- 8.2.3 Prospective employees undergo pre-employment checks, which include verifying their identity, obtaining references covering the last three years of continuous employment, confirming their eligibility to work in the UK and validating their qualifications.
- 8.2.4 DBS checks are conducted for relevant roles. The type of DBS check - Standard or Enhanced is determined by the nature of the role.
- 8.2.5 Prospective employees must complete the following checks prior to appointment, which help understand is being hired and identify connections to modern slavery, whether as a perpetrator or victim.
- 8.2.6 Pre-employment checks include:
- Proof of eligibility to work in the UK in accordance with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.
 - A declaration of any unspent convictions.
 - Reference checks for the last three years of continuous employment.
 - Pre-employment Occupational Health Screening, including substance abuse testing.
 - Standard or Enhanced DBS checks for roles that meet specific criteria.
- 8.2.7 Although utilising employment agencies is typically an exception rather than the norm, the People and Culture department collaborates with the Procurement team to ensure that any agency meets the necessary compliance measures and requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- 8.2.8 Any employment agency that supplies temporary or permanent employees will be verified to meet the minimum standard employment checks as per requirements.

9. Training

- 9.1 We recognise that it is essential for employees to be trained in identifying and responding to suspected incidents of modern slavery. We ensure that employees, many of whom interact with the public, are aware of the issues associated with modern slavery. It is the responsibility of all employees to report any concerns or signs of modern slavery or unethical behaviour within business activities or our supply chains. This reporting can occur through various channels, including line management, the Safeguarding Manager, the Procurement Services Manager or our Whistleblowing arrangements.
- 9.2 Safeguarding training is a mandatory part of an employee's induction and applicable to all full time employees and volunteers. Additional advanced safeguarding training is provided for employees who engage directly with the community or have specific safeguarding responsibilities, such as operational employees, Flexi Duty Officers, Fire Safety Inspectors/Auditors, Prevention and

Education employees, and Control Room Operatives. This training is conducted annually and includes procedures for identifying and reporting any vulnerable children or adults who are perceived to be at risk.

- 9.3 All employees are required to complete mandatory e-learning on modern slavery. This training aims to enhance their understanding of recognising signs and indicators of exploitation, guiding them on how to assist potential victims and escalate concerns through the appropriate channels. Employees are expected to promote good practice by serving as role models, actively contributing to discussions about safeguarding, and positively involving others in developing safe practices.
- 9.4 The Procurement team participates in continuing professional development, which includes training on modern slavery within supply chains. They complete the annual CIPS Ethical Procurement module and test.
- 9.5 Records of all employee training completions are maintained in the learning management system overseen by the Service's Learning and Development team.

10. Partnership working

- 10.1 The [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) requires the Service to cooperate with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). Employees are part of the Northumbria LRF, consisting of organisations and agencies involved in emergency response across the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear area, aimed at providing the most effective and efficient response to civil emergencies. Additionally, we support the [Serious Violence Duty 2022](#) by working with partners to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- 10.2 The Safeguarding Manager oversees our safeguarding arrangements and participates in Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Local Safeguarding Adults Boards and as well as council and local community safety sub-groups. Furthermore, our employees collaborate with social services, mental health teams, local authorities, housing associations and the police by attending meetings to stay informed about emerging trends in modern slavery. The intelligence gathered through these networks enhances our ability to recognise risks related to modern slavery.

11. Performance indicators

- 11.1 During the year we were able to assess the effectiveness of our actions to ensure that modern slavery does not occur within our business activities or supply chains:
- No reports have been received from employees, the public, or law enforcement agencies to indicate that modern slavery practices have been identified.
 - No reports from our supply chain indicate that modern slavery practices have been found.
 - All employees had access to mandatory safeguarding training and are required to complete this training.

- All employees had access to mandatory modern slavery training and are required to complete this training.
- All employees had access to mandatory culture and inclusion training and are required to complete this training.
- All standard tender documentation included a pass/fail section concerning compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and financial due diligence.
- The Procurement team are MCIPS qualified or working towards MCIPS.
- Procurement strategies consider modern slavery risks to ensure that the award criteria can determine if the winning supplier is capable of addressing any issue related to modern slavery.
- Proper recording, reporting, and responding to suspected incidents of modern slavery were in place to protect those affected, where necessary.

11.2 To coincide with Anti-Slavery Awareness Day in October 2024, the Service shared a news article and a corporate governance bulletin to raise awareness of the issues associated with modern slavery.

12. Monitoring and evaluation

12.1 We are committed to acting ethically, with integrity and transparency in all business dealings. We have established effective systems and controls to protect against modern slavery. This statement outlines the practices in place to prevent, detect and report instances of modern slavery in alignment with legislation.

12.2 We are committed to improving our approach to preventing modern slavery and for the year ahead we will continue to:

- Conduct due diligence with suppliers and implement responsible procurement practices.
- Ensure all employees are legally entitled to work in the UK and that the contract is directly with them.
- Support the local safeguarding boards, focusing on implementing lessons learnt from safeguarding reviews where modern slavery was present.
- Monitor policies and procedures in line with their review cycles or changes in legislative and/or operating practices.
- Enhance the modern slavery training provided to employees.
- Share intelligence and report instances of modern slavery.