

# MODERN SLAVERY UPDATE 2021/22

Cabinet - 11 August 2022



## 1. SUMMARY

This paper sets out the progress made against the Modern Slavery Action Plan 21/22 and asks Cabinet to note the progress made in tackling and preventing modern slavery within the Council. Building on the success of the Modern Slavery Action Plan (21/22) this paper sets out a new Modern Slavery Statement for this financial year which includes further steps that we plan to take to combat modern slavery and a refreshed Modern Slavery Policy.

The Modern Slavery Statement provides an update on our progress to combat modern slavery to date along with our planned activity for the coming year. The Modern Slavery Policy remains largely the same, only minor changes have been made. These include new references to safeguarding and equality and diversity.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Modern slavery is defined by the Government as ‘the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation. It includes holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after.’ Modern Slavery is a crime under the Modern Slavery Act 2015<sup>1</sup>.

The Modern Slavery Act (2015) (MSA) sets out a range of measures on how modern slavery and human trafficking should be dealt with in the UK. As reported last year, in January 2019, the Home Office published its Second Interim Report from the Independent Review of the MSA, covering transparency in supply chains. In summary the review called for current legislation to be strengthened.

The recommendations made from the review centred on seven areas, including the recommendation that Section 54\* should be extended to the public sector:

- Local government, agencies and other public authorities should publish a statement if their annual budget exceeds £36 million.
- Government should strengthen its public procurement processes to make sure that non-compliant companies in scope of section 54 are not eligible for public contracts.
- Crown Commercial Service should keep a database of public contractors and details of compliance checks and due diligence carried out by public authorities. The database should be easily accessible to public authorities for use during the procurement process.

(\* Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires commercial organisations carrying out business in the UK, with a turnover of at least £36 million, to prepare and publish a slavery and human trafficking statement for each and every financial year).

Taking on board the recommendations and following a consultation period, the Government announced in September 2020 future changes to the reporting requirements for modern slavery statements, that would help to ensure there is transparency in supply chains, but these changes have not yet come into effect.

However, in May 2022 the Government set out the Modern Slavery Bill within the Queen’s Speech which reflects the recommendations. The Bill aims to strengthen the protection and support for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. It also aims to increase the accountability of

<sup>1</sup> Definition of modern slavery via Public Health England, (2017) Research and analysis Modern slavery (Online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-and-public-health/modern-slavery-and-public-health#definition-of-modern-slavery>

companies and other organisations to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains. The main elements of the Bill include:

- Strengthening the requirements on businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual modern slavery statement which sets out steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.
- Mandating the reporting areas to be covered in modern slavery statements; requiring organisations to publish their statements on a government-run registry, extending these requirements to public bodies and introducing civil penalties for organisations that do not comply with the requirements.
- Strengthening the operation of Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders and Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders, which place conditions on an individual, to prevent and disrupt modern slavery crimes and better protect victims. These will be backed up by criminal sanctions for any breaches.

### **3. MODERN SLAVERY NATIONALLY**

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and Duty to notify (DtN) statistics covering quarter 1 2022 were released on Thursday 12 May. The statistical bulletins provide a summary of the number of potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM from 01 January to 31 March 2022. The statistics show that:

- 3,777 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in quarter 1 2022, representing a 13% increase compared to the preceding quarter (3,334) and a 29% increase from quarter 1 2021
- the number of referrals received this quarter is the highest since the NRM began in 2009 (the previous highest number was 3,343 in quarter 4 2019)
- 77% (2,906) were male and 23% (870) were female
- 54% (2,036) of potential victims claimed exploitation in the UK only and 35% (1,340) claimed exploitation overseas only
- the number of potential victims that claimed exploitation overseas this quarter is the highest since the NRM began (the previous highest number was 1,173 in quarter 3 2021)
- 54% (2,054) of referrals were for potential victims who claimed exploitation as adults and 39% (1,471) claimed exploitation as children
- adult potential victims most commonly claimed labour exploitation (33%; 681), whereas child potential victims were most often referred for criminal exploitation (46%; 670)
- the most common nationalities referred this quarter were Albanian, UK and Eritrean.

### **4. MODERN SLAVERY IN PLYMOUTH**

Modern slavery is relatively uncommon in Plymouth. Throughout 2022, Plymouth City Council has been involved with two enquiries / investigations relating to modern slavery. The most common forms of modern slavery in the city are sexual exploitation and labour exploitation.

Despite the low levels of modern slavery in the city, the Council is committed to combatting modern slavery. We are committed to ensuring the safety of women and girls in the city following the publication of the Violence Against Women and Girls Commission's report earlier this year. We are involved in extensive partnership work and work closely with partners such as the Police and Unseen who have extensive experience in this area. A Senior Safer Communities Officer from Plymouth City Council chairs Plymouth's Local Anti-Slavery Partnership and also represents Plymouth on the Regional Anti-Slavery Partnership alongside Devon & Cornwall Police's Modern Slavery Crime Lead.

Over the past 12 months, the Community Connections Department within Plymouth City Council has been involved in the National Crime Agencies Operation Aidant. This is a proactive engagement across the city following nationally set themes. Most recently, Operation Aidant focused on takeaways and restaurants delivery as part of a national project. Just under a hundred takeaways and restaurants were visited in a two-week period. The next Operation Aidant will focus on Child Trafficking and will take place in late 2022. The intelligence gathered during these Operations helps to shape our understanding of the modern slavery risks within the city.

The support provided to victims of modern slavery varies however, there is always a strong focus on the safety and wellbeing of the victim(s) and where appropriate, this includes the provision of temporary accommodation, access to support services, food and clothing provision and consideration if a referral into the National Referral Mechanism is required.

We have acknowledged the risk of modern slavery facing people fleeing from the war in Ukraine and have put process in place with our partners to mitigate this risk. An employment pathway is in place for people when they arrive in Plymouth to try to mitigate the risk of modern slavery by ensuring they are connected with the appropriate agencies and are supported to search for legal employment independently. In addition, working with providers we carry out wellbeing and property checks which helps us identify any red flags.

## 5. OUR PROGRESS AND MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

In 2021, the Council agreed on an organisational approach to tackle modern slavery. The Council has made progress in delivering against the Modern Slavery Action Plan (21/22) in the last 12 months, though further work is required.

The progress is focused on some key areas of work, specifically around ensuring that our supply chains are transparent, the most vulnerable members of our community are safeguarded and our employees are supported to identify and tackle modern slavery.

Examples of our activities during the past 12 months include;

- Provided training to procurement colleagues on ethical procurement.
- Continuing to require tendered contractors where applicable, to adopt a whistle-blowing policy.
- Developing modern slavery performance monitoring.
- Devoting a substantial part of 'Safer Plymouth Week' to raise awareness of modern slavery.
- Developing a modern slavery e-learning course.

Further detail on our progress is set out in **Appendix A**.

We now want to reiterate our commitment to tackling modern slavery and build upon our progress to date by publishing our Modern Slavery Statement for 2022/23.

Our new Modern Slavery Statement sets out our position and progress to date and can be found in **Appendix B**. It covers the six areas that the [Home Office's statutory guidance](#) recommends that we cover in our Statement:

1. Organisation structure and supply chains
2. Policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking
3. Due diligence processes
4. Risk assessment and management
5. Key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of steps being taken
6. Training on modern slavery and trafficking

The Statement also sets out some of our next steps and these are reflected in our annotated Modern Slavery Action Plan (21/22).

In line with our commitment to review our Modern Slavery Policy annually, this has been done and minor changes have been made. The updated Modern Slavery Policy can be found in **Appendix C**.