

# Oxford City Council Modern Slavery Transparency Statement June 2019

This statement sets out the action that Oxford City Council has taken to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its business or supply chains.

## Oxford City

Is one of the youngest, most diverse and renowned cities in England. We serve approximately 160,000 residents. Oxford is the cultural hub of Oxfordshire's world-class economy and employs approximately 88,000 people with 46,000 that commute into the city. We also have approximately 9 million tourists of which 1 million stay a night. As a district council we provide and commission a significant range of services and therefore have a real opportunity to influence services and support to residents.

Oxford City Council and its partners aspire to being the best in the UK and having safe, strong communities is a key priority for us. We take our responsibilities to safeguard the most vulnerable in society very seriously and this involves protecting people from the horrendous crime of Modern Slavery and Exploitation

## Why is it important?

In 2018 6,993 potential victims of modern slavery in the UK were submitted to the National Referral Mechanism.

On a local scale, within the Thames Valley 139 victims were identified as victims of domestic servitude, forced labour and sexual exploitation. They were identified as coming from 19 different countries, including the UK.

Councils are uniquely placed to be at the forefront of the fight against modern slavery and can demonstrate awareness and ethical leadership by voluntarily completing modern slavery transparency statements.

## What we have achieved so far

- Worked with partners to establish clear governance arrangements to ensure that modern slavery is addressed at a strategic level.
- Work with Victim First-Willow Project' to promote access to early intervention for victims across the Thames Valley area in need of help and support
- Trained safeguarding lead officers in all directorates who support staff to respond to safeguarding issues and Modern Slavery
- All Councillors receive awareness training on equality, diversity and safeguarding. They also attend briefings which include Modern Slavery. Councillors are, therefore, very well placed within their local communities to identify concerns. Councillors have used this understanding to report issues around exploitation.
- We are a member of a multi-agency partnership to oversee and deliver a coherent, county wide plan to address modern slavery and exploitation.
- We actively participate in the Oxfordshire Anti-slavery Network to address modern slavery issues.
- Work with partner agencies and local businesses to raise awareness of Modern slavery especially to highlight Anti-Slavery Day. In 2018 the Oxford Red Bus company supported the campaign by displaying a bespoke film and posters on their Park and Ride buses and Travel shops in the city.

Click here to view the [Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2018-2019](#)

## **Our Supply Chain**

The Council seeks to develop long-term relationships with our suppliers based on the principles of fair, open and honest dealings at all times. Suppliers are required to demonstrate compliance with these ethical standards by providing safe working conditions, treat workers with dignity and respect and act ethically and within the law in their use of labour. Serious violations will lead to the termination of the business relationship.

The council procured goods and services from 1708 various suppliers in the 2018/19 financial year, spending over £80,825,460. The council's approach to ethical procurement is formalised under Appendix 2 of the Corporate Procurement Strategy.

## **Partnerships**

The Council works in partnership, at a strategic and operational level, with a wide range of agencies to prevent abuse and neglect, to detect and report occurrences and to support victims.

We have representation at strategic level on the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Childrens Board (OSCB) and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) and operationally at the Safeguarding Board sub-groups. The Council is represented at a strategic partnership level on the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health Improvement Board and Children's Trust.

The Council is a co-chair on the Oxfordshire Modern Slavery Network, a group of frontline organisations that share information and coordinate activities to address modern slavery.

## **Our Workforce**

We address Modern Slavery risks through our working practices including:

### **Recruitment**

The Council has robust procedures for vetting new employees, which ensure they are able to confirm their identities, eligibility to work in the UK, their qualifications and that they are paid directly into an appropriate, personal bank account.

### **Agency Workers**

The Council verified the practices of the temporary agency staff providers it uses.

### **Pay**

The Council is an accredited Living Wage Employer and pays the voluntary Oxford Living Wage. This is also the minimum rate paid to agency staff and we encourage other employers to pay the Voluntary Living Wage. The Council's [Pay Policy Statement](#) is available on our website here.

### **Employee Code of Conduct**

The Council's Employee Code of Conduct strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour and breaches are investigated.

### **Whistleblowing**

The Council encourages all its employees, customers and other business partners to report any concerns related to the direct activities or the supply chains of the Council.

### **Next steps**

- We will ensure all staff receive the appropriate level of safeguarding training needed for their role and ensure the training is kept up to date in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards guidelines.
- To ensure safeguarding actions identified in the 2018 safeguarding audit on commission services are implemented.
- We will review the effectiveness of and attendance at Modern Slavery & Safeguarding training programmes
- Carry out an audit within our Procurement systems to ensure our approach to the supply chain is being adhered to
- Expand the current Safeguarding champion's expertise to include Modern Slavery
- Include Modern Slavery and Exploitation within our internal safeguarding reporting system 'MyConcerns'

This voluntary statement is made with reference to Section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes the Oxford City Council Modern Slavery Transparency statement for the financial year ending March 2020



Signed and approved by  
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive