

Essex County Council

Modern slavery and human trafficking statement 2022

Modern slavery is a heinous and often hidden crime, and the impact can be devastating for the victims. Modern slavery can be broadly grouped into four categories but is not limited to:

- **Sexual exploitation:** this includes sexual abuse, forced prostitution and the abuse of children for the production of child abuse images or videos
- **Domestic servitude:** this involves victims being forced to work in usually private households, performing domestic chores and childcare duties
- **Labour Exploitation:** this can happen in various industries, including construction, manufacturing, laying driveways, hospitality, food packaging, agriculture, maritime and beauty (nail bars)
- **Criminal exploitation:** this can be understood as the exploitation of a person to commit a crime, such as pick-pocketing, shop-lifting, cannabis cultivation, drug trafficking and other similar activities that are subject to penalties and imply financial gain for the trafficker
- **Other** forms of exploitation include organ removal, forced begging fraud, marriage, and illegal adoption.

Essex County Council (ECC) recognises its responsibility to take a robust approach to modern slavery and human trafficking. To demonstrate this ECC has recently conducted an Internal Audit on Modern Day Slavery to support a proactive approach to managing its Modern Day Slavery risk exposure.

This annual statement sets out ECC's actions to understand all potential modern slavery risks related to our activities and to put in place steps to eliminate acts of modern slavery and human trafficking within our business and in our supply chains, sub-contractors and partners. ECC is committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in all its activities, and to ensure our supply chains are also free of this.

The publication of this Annual Statement is part of that commitment and highlights our activities to address this.

Organisation's structure

ECC governs the non metropolitan county of Essex in England. At the time of the 2021 census, it served a population of 1,503,300, (excluding Southend and Thurrock) which makes it one of the largest local authorities in England

As a non-metropolitan county council, responsibilities are shared between districts (including boroughs) and in many areas also between civil parish (including town) councils. We provide county-wide services including:

- schools
- roads
- children's social care
- adult social care

- Trading Standards
- Youth Offending Service

Decisions about the way we run our services are taken by the 75 Councillors that are elected every 4 years. The 75 councillors come from different political parties, and some have different roles in the decision-making process.

Our Business

People

We have a number of policies and procedures in place that aim to ensure modern slavery does not occur in our business:

- **Robust Recruitment Policy** and process which are compliant with UK employment legislation, the process includes several pre-employment checks, for example 'right to work' document checks, referencing and understanding any employment gaps. DBS checks are undertaken for relevant posts
- **Mandatory Corporate Governance Training**, (which includes the employee code of conduct, how we behave, and Equality and Diversity), defines the responsibilities and standards required for all who work for and on behalf of us including interims, agency workers and employees seconded to other organisations.
- **Whistle Blowing** - reporting knowledge or suspicion of slavery through our whistleblowing procedures and hotline which ensures that staff or members can raise their concerns confidentially without fear of reprisal. For those staff unable to raise their concern with anyone within ECC they can contact Ethics point, Ethics point is an independent external whistleblowing provider that delivers ECC's Speak up! Service.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children

We have responsibility to develop, implement and monitor policies and processes to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults and children and work within multi-agency partnerships to protect and safeguard people.

Staff awareness E-Learning training for staff which supports the Modern Slavery Act, such as, Essex Social Care Academy (ESCA) – An Introduction to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, Child Trafficking and Slavery Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery Spotting the Signs and What you should Do Human Trafficking, is available to all ECC staff.

Procurement

Procurement consists of three front facing teams, People, Place and Corporate. Across these teams the total value of all managed contracts is £3.9bn with over 1300 suppliers managed.

Corporate

The Corporate Procurement team consists of two main sub teams: Core Corporate and Technology working with over 200 suppliers and supporting a number of organisationally critical systems. Place

The Place Procurement team is divided into five major sub teams: Highways and Major Schemes, Passenger Transport, Waste, Energy and Environment, Construction and Schools Public Finance Initiative and Housing and Facilities Management.

The Place team manage more than 100 contracts with over 125 suppliers.

People

The People team cover several service areas including older people, adults with disabilities, mental health, education, children and families and public health.

Within adult social care, over 15,600 adults are supported through partnership with over 1150 suppliers to achieve the best possible outcomes for Essex residents.

Procurement Supply Chains

Our procurement activity complies with the Council's Procurement Rules and the wider Public Contract Regulations 2015. To support our Category Management approach to minimise market risks concerning modern slavery within our large and complex supply chain, we are investigating how we can utilise market risk assessment tools, such as, the Walk Free Global Slavery Index to identify countries that use child and forced labour to produce goods and services.

To comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, we have:

- updated our professional and technical ability tender questions within the procurement sourcing process. The questions require a bidder to evidence their compliance with the Modern Slavery Act if they are a relevant commercial organisation as defined by Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Any bidder who fails to evidence their compliance with the required legislation shall be excluded from participating further in the tender process.
- Incorporated within our standard contract terms clauses that specify the Supplier's contractual obligation concerning Modern Slavery.
- Any supplier engaged by us to undertake the supply of goods and or services is contracted to do so in line with our following policies:
 - Safeguarding
 - Equality and diversity code of conduct
 - Whistleblowing

These policies are key to ensuring that staff employed by our supply chain have appropriate channels to report any incidents of slavery and human trafficking.

We are currently reviewing and updating our contract management processes and guidance with a view to relaunching in the Autumn 2022. This will include utilising supply chain management techniques such as supply chain mapping to ensure that effective contract management is applied to direct suppliers and their supply chain to deliver our requirements in the most cost-effective manner.

It will equally cover the identification and management of risks in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking. Possible ways of doing this could include:

- increasing openness, transparency, and efficiency in the management of supply chains
- improving ability to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in supply chains
- improving communications with suppliers
- enhancing relationships with suppliers

One such approach will be (if appropriate and proportionate) the introduction of annual audits on suppliers to ensure compliance with the contract agreement. A Contract Compliance Audit Template has been developed within our Contract Management Tool and is currently being tested with full roll out planned in Autumn 2022. The outcome of this will inform how we can continue to review how modern slavery is incorporated into the contract management process.

We are also looking at how we can capture information that will enable us to have effective oversight of modern slavery risks. This could take the form of KPIs that might include the following:

- All suppliers confirming their adherence to the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- All relevant Suppliers will need to evidence the publication of their Modern Slavery Statement
- Annual monitoring of modern slavery risks with suppliers and internal functions which informs gap analysis and reflective action log and programme
- Percentage of suppliers reporting that all their staff have completed modern slavery training.

Training

The Procurement Induction Pack given to all new members of the Procurement Team sign-posts Staff to available training on The Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Act 2015. This has included the internal ESCA E-Learning and external training. Going forward it is intended that training on Modern Slavery will be mandatory for all new team members, training options for non-procurement staff is being reviewed. To continue to offer training to new and established team members that is relevant specifically to Procurement we are looking at all resources available.

Further Information

Finding Help

If you or someone you know is being or has been exploited or you are unsure if someone is in need of help, assistance and advice is available:

for life-threatening emergencies, call 999, or for non-emergencies, call 101 for the police

[Modern Slavery Helpline](#) can be called on 08000 121 700 or contacted via an [online form](#)

[Victim Support](#) can be called on 0808 16 89 111 or contacted via an [online form](#)

[Crimestoppers](#) can be called on 0800 555 111 or contacted via an [online form](#)

[Migrant Help](#) can be called on 01304 203977

[The Salvation Army](#) have a 24/7 confidential referral helpline, which can be called on 0800 808 3733

Child Victim - Essex Social Care - 0345 603 7627

This statement will be reviewed on an annual basis, which will take place on or before 1 April 2023.

This statement will be published on the ECC website and on the Government 'Modern Slavery Statement Register' which went live on the 6th May 2021.

This statement has been signed by Kevin Bentley Leader of the Council and Gavin Jones, Chief Executive Officer of Essex County Council.

Further information on modern slavery can be found on [GOV.UK](#).