Modern Slavery Statement

2024

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Introduction

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms, such as slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. All forms have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was introduced.

This modern slavery statement sets out our zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms in all our activities including any of our supply chains. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (The Service) has implemented systems and controls to do all it can to ensure modern slavery is not taking place in the service or through our supply chains. The Service will ensure our staff are sufficiently trained to identify modern slavery risks when undertaking both procurement and front-line services. We will educate our staff to spot signals of possible modern slavery as they perform their roles and work within our partners and communities, and we will support employees with any referral processes.

The Service 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.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Service supports the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 which consolidates slavery and trafficking offences, introduces tougher penalties and sentencing rules, and provides more support for victims.

Modern slavery includes:

- **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.

The Organisational Structure

The Fire & Rescue Authority

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that 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.

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer with the support of the Service Executive Board (EB) who has overall responsibility for the organisation's strategic direction, leadership and decision making and considers strategic issues, finance, and risk.

The Service Leadership Team (SLT) provides day to day leadership and management for the Service. Overseeing a working environment which supports the effective achievement of goals and priorities. They maintain all necessary standards of compliance and good practice. SLT has delegated responsibility for developing and delivering against service plans, strategies, and budgets.

Supply Chain Due Diligence

The Service spends £16-£20M per annum and is committed to ensuring contracts for the supply of goods, services and works are compliant with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, UK legislation and the Authority Contracts Standing Orders. The Service expects all suppliers competing for its business to be aware of and comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act. The Service takes responsibility to ensure the procurement governance and practices will assist in the identification and elimination of modern slavery and human trafficking, encouraging fair pay and working conditions in our supply chains. The Act requires suppliers with a turnover in excess of £36 million to provide a Statement on Slavery and Human Trafficking in their supply chain and provide an annual update.

The Service adopts a category management approach to procurement based on the highest spend areas: Fleet, Operational Equipment, Estates, ICT and Corporate Services. A risk-based approach is adopted to identification of modern slavery and tackling modern slavery breaches, that considers the category of expenditure, subject-matter of the contract, risk of modern slavery, size of contract as well as the size of the supplier. We are committed to eliminating modern slavery in our supply chains and subcontracting arrangements, both during the procurement and contract management phases.

Safeguarding Policy and Training

The Service has a Safeguarding Team and Manager and has implemented a mandatory Safeguarding e-learning package for all staff with plans to develop safeguarding training and practices further. Due to our operational activities and public engagement roles the Service also has a Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at Risk Policy.

All staff have a duty with regards to safeguarding and to pass on any welfare concerns using the referral process. All staff are expected to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, actively contributing to discussions about safeguarding and positively involving people in the development of safe practices.

Partnership Working

The Service has responsibilities to work with local resilience forums (LRFs) and partners to protect vulnerable people. The Service are part of the Modern Slavery multi-agency groups and have responsibilities to support the Serious Violence Duty 2022. The Service embraces partnership working as a key enabler to achieving our mission to improve public safety.

The Service is a partner with; National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay Borough Council and Plymouth City Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, Avon and Somerset Police and is represented on the Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Partnerships, Local Safeguarding Adults Boards and Partnerships and Council and Local Community Safety Groups.

Effectiveness and Key Performance Indicators

Key highlights of the work we have undertaken in reducing the risk of slavery and human trafficking are set out below:

- All staff have access to mandatory ‘Safeguarding’ training.
- All staff have access to mandatory equality, diversity, and inclusion training
- All standard tender documentation includes a pass/fail section relating to complying with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and financial due diligence.
- Procurement team are MCIPS (Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply) qualified or working towards MCIPS
- All procurement and safeguarding team members have specific Modern Slavery e-learning training including the Treasurer.
- A review of the supply market to determine if the category, subject matter, supplier of the contract could give rise to modern slavery risks.

- Procurement strategies that take into consideration modern slavery risks ensuring that the award criteria can determine that the winning supplier is capable of addressing any modern slavery risks and issues.
- Recording, reporting, and responding to suspected incidents of modern slavery and protecting, where required, whistle blowers.

During the next year, we will deliver the following objectives which will further enhance the systems and controls that are already in place:

- The Procurement and safeguarding teams will continue to undertake specific training related to modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Introducing new mandatory Safeguarding training for all staff which specifically includes modern slavery.
- Review standard terms and conditions to ensure appropriate clauses are present and use bespoke clauses in relation to Modern Slavery Act when our standard terms are not used.
- Review Contract Standing orders to ensure clearer responsibilities regarding Modern Slavery.
- Utilise the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool (MSAT) to work with our suppliers to implement effective modern slavery due diligence.
- Publish risks identified and controls taken to ensure that Modern Slavery is not taking place in our supply chain.
- Widen Modern slavery training to other key stakeholders such as the Treasurer and Monitoring Officer or delegated officers.

Training and Capacity Building

Further information on Modern Slavery is available from:

- Modern slavery - GOV.UK
- Devon and Cornwall Police - Modern Slavery information
- Avon and Somerset Police - Modern Slavery information
- Modern Slavery is closer than you think
- Modern Slavery Helpline

Help free the UK from Modern slavery, report it. If it's an emergency call **999**. Or, for help and advice from the Modern Slavery helpline call any time on **0800 0121 700** (free from landlines and most mobile phones). Or, you can visit the Modern Slavery website and complete the online form.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK video covers how modern slavery occurs in supply chains, some of the methods traffickers use to trap people into forced labour, what a transparent supply chain is, who the most vulnerable to exploitation are, and what we can do to address it. The short animation is of three anonymised stories, on modern slavery in supply chains.

The Service will support this Act through:

- Delivering on our statutory responsibilities
- Staff training and education on identification of Modern Slavery
- Partnership working with relevant agencies and groups
- Private Sector engagement and responsible procurement practices
- Service wide training on safeguarding and equality, diversity and inclusion

Gavin Ellis

Chief Fire Officer

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