

**Blaby District Council**  
**Council**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	16 July 2024
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Modern Slavery Statement 2024</b> This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr. Terry Richardson - Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Customer Insight, Experience and Engagement Service Manager
<b>Strategic Themes</b>	Enabling our communities and supporting our vulnerable residents

**1. What is this report about?**

- 1.1 There are several duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This report set out requirements and recommended good practice for local authorities under the Act.
- 1.2 This report presents a Modern Slavery statement for Blaby District Council for the year 2024/25.

**2. Recommendation(s) to Council**

- 2.1 That the Modern Slavery Statement at Appendix A be adopted.

**3. Reason for Decisions Recommended**

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 that organisations with a turnover of £36m or more publish a statement on their approach to ensuring that there is no modern slavery in their own business and their supply chains. Although Blaby District Council is under no legal obligation to publish a statement, the Local Government Association is encouraging all local authorities to produce an annual statement ensuring transparency in their approach to modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 3.2 The Modern Slavery Act also includes a number of provisions for local authorities. Section 52 of the Act places a duty to identify and report potential victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Depending on the age and needs of victims of modern slavery, councils may also have statutory responsibilities to provide support to them.
- 3.3 Relevant policies should reflect the councils agreed approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking to ensure that this statement is successfully delivered.

## **4. Matters to consider**

### **4.1 Background**

Modern slavery is a crime resulting in an abuse of human rights. It is constituted in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 by the offences of 'slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour' and 'human trafficking'.

Victims of modern slavery and human trafficking can be men, women and children of all ages, ethnicities and nationalities. However, exploitation is normally more prevalent among the most vulnerable or within minority or socially excluded groups. Poverty, lack of education, unstable social and political conditions, economic imbalances and war are key issues that contribute to someone's vulnerability in becoming a victim of modern slavery. In addition, victims can often face more than one type of abuse and slavery, for example being sold on to another trafficker and then forced into another form of exploitation.

The National Referral Mechanism reports there has been an 870% rise in referrals of potential victims of modern slavery in the past ten years. The Anti-Slavery International and The Royal United Services Institute estimate that 130,000 people are currently subjected to slavery in the UK.

In recent years Unseen, the anti-slavery charity, has seen a worrying rise in calls about care sector workers being abused. It follows changes in the rules to make it easier for overseas social care staff to work in the UK, with the aim of filling thousands of job vacancies.

Most exploited care workers are women from overseas, working long and gruelling hours – often 20 hours each day. In some cases, they earn as little as £2 per hour. Those most at risk appear to be care workers from India, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Some have paid huge sums of money to unscrupulous employers or recruitment agencies to come to the UK on special visas designed to fill vacancies in the care sector. Often the workers do not understand their rights in the UK, which leaves them vulnerable to further abuse.

The Government has introduced a provision (Section 54) in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 which requires organisations (with a turnover of £36m or over) to produce a statement setting out the steps they have taken to ensure there is no modern slavery in their own business and their supply chains. If an organisation has taken no steps to do this, their statement should say so creating a level playing field between those businesses, which act responsibly and those that need to change their policies and practices. However, the Government wants to encourage organisations to do more, not just because they are legally obliged to, but also because they recognise it is the right thing to do.

One key purpose of this measure is to prevent modern slavery in organisations and their supply chains. A means to achieve this is to increase transparency by ensuring the public, partners, and employees know what steps an organisation is taking to tackle modern slavery. Organisations will need to build on what they are doing year on year.

Through their regulatory role interacting with local businesses and landlords, council officers are well placed to identify cases of modern slavery and work with law enforcement partners to use regulatory tools to intervene and disrupt it. Additionally, through their individual and collective buying power, councils have significant leverage to seek to eradicate modern slavery from their extensive supply chains.

The Modern Slavery Act also includes several provisions for local authorities. Section 52 of the Act places a duty to identify and report potential victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Depending on the age and needs of victims of modern slavery, councils may also have statutory responsibilities to provide support to them.

The Government encourages all businesses to develop an appropriate and effective response to modern slavery. The Local Government Association (LGA) is also encouraging local authorities to produce individual statements. The LGA states that local councils “are uniquely placed to be at the forefront of the fight against modern slavery”. Several councils have already voluntarily compiled their statement and the LGA is encouraging others to follow suit.

In November 2018 Blaby District Council adopted a Modern Slavery Statement. The Council reviews this Statement regularly as required by the legislation. The Statement at Appendix A outlines the policies and activity that the Council will use to ensure that we are transparent in our activities and are working to ensure that there is no slavery and human trafficking within its business or supply chains. The Act requires a slavery and human trafficking statement to be approved and signed by an appropriate senior person in the business. The Blaby District Council Modern Slavery statement will therefore be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

#### 4.2 Proposal(s)

For Blaby District Council to adopt the Modern Slavery Statement as set out in Appendix A.

#### 4.3 Relevant Consultations

- Finance Group Manager
- Community Services Manager
- Transformation Group Manager

#### 4.4 Significant Issues

Due regard should be given to data protection legislation (GDPR). Councils' statutory powers support joint investigations by allowing for the sharing of information in support of the prevention or detection of crime and in support of legal proceedings. The LGA has a memorandum of understanding on data sharing with HMRC which all councils can sign up to in order to share and receive data from HMRC.

Human Resources – In order to identify and support victims of slavery and human trafficking within the workplace, in the supply-chain or when delivering services, staff will require appropriate training.

#### 5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

5.1 There are no cost implications.

#### 6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Slavery may be used in the supply of goods or services to the Council	Procurement Toolkit updated to ensure that modern slavery and human trafficking does not form part of the supply chain
Officers are not able to identify possible cases of slavery	Training on awareness and recognising the signs of modern slavery and human trafficking whether that be through the supply chain, customers when delivering services or during recruitment and/or employment.

#### 7. Other options considered

7.1 Not to adopt and publish a Modern Slavery Statement. Although there is no requirement for the Council to produce a statement it is considered best practice and encouraged by the Local Government Association.

#### 8. Environmental impact

8.1 Not applicable.

#### 9. Other significant issues

9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.

9.2 Significant issues relating to Modern Slavery have been addressed at paragraph 4.4.

## **10. Appendix**

10.1 Appendix A – Blaby District Council Modern Slavery Statement

## **11. Background paper(s)**

11.1 Tackling modern slavery: A council guide – Local Government Association Unseen, 2023 Annual Report

## **12. Report author's contact details**

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