



Report to the Leader (Communities portfolio)

Decision Date: 19 July 2022

Title: Modern Slavery Statement for Buckinghamshire Council

Author: Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety

Recommendations: To agree the Modern Slavery Statement for Buckinghamshire Council.

1. Background

1.1 The Modern Slavery Act became law in March 2015. All local authorities have a role to play in supporting the four key priority areas outlined in the Government's Modern Slavery Strategy:

- Pursue - prosecuting and disrupting individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery
- Prevent - preventing people from engaging in modern slavery crime
- Protect - strengthening safeguards against modern slavery by protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and increasing awareness and resilience against this crime
- Prepare - reducing the harm caused by modern slavery through improved victim identification and enhanced support and protection.

1.2 Under the Modern Slavery Act (2015) local authorities, specified as First Responder organisations, have a Duty to Notify the Home Office if they identify a potential victim of Modern Slavery. First Responders must submit referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or for any victims who do not wish to be referred into the NRM, First Responders must submit a Duty to Notify referral (DtN). If the victim does not consent to go through the NRM then further responsibilities exist through other legislation that may impact local authorities e.g. the Care Act (2014) and the Housing Act (1996).

1.3 The Act also requires certain organisations to publish a statement on the steps they are taking to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. The requirement applies to commercial organisations and charities who meet the following criteria:

- it is a 'body corporate' or a partnership, wherever incorporated or formed
- it carries on a business, or part of a business, in the UK
- it supplies goods or services
- it has an annual turnover of £36 million or more

1.4 The Home Office recommends that 6 areas are covered in the statement: organisation structure and supply chains, policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking, due diligence processes, risk assessment and management, key performance indicators to measure effectiveness of steps being taken and training on modern slavery and trafficking

1.5 At present there is no legal obligation for local authorities to publish an annual Modern Slavery Statement. However, it is considered best practice and the Government has noted that it is minded to extend the duty to publish an annual statement to local government, agencies and other public authorities if their annual budget exceeds £36 million. Buckinghamshire Council published its first [Modern Slavery Statement](#) as a new unitary authority in 2020, building on the legacy of statements produced by previous district authorities in Buckinghamshire.

2. Main content of report

2.1 A Modern Slavery Statement has been prepared for Buckinghamshire Council and is attached at Appendix 1.

2.2 Modern Slavery Statements are intended to specifically focus on business practices and describe the steps an organisation has taken during the financial year to identify, prevent and mitigate risks of modern slavery within its operations and supply chains. The Council has extensive responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act as a first responder and in tackling modern slavery and exploitation which are therefore not covered in detail within the Modern Slavery Statement. The wider work we are undertaking as a council is addressed through the [Safer Buckinghamshire Plan](#) and associated delivery plans under the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership and our joint working with the Safeguarding Boards and Health & Wellbeing Board through the Joint Protocol.

2.3 Statutory guidance states that Modern Slavery Statements should be reported within 6 months of an organisation's financial year and report on the previous year's activities. It should also include actions we plan to undertake over the forthcoming year. However, as a new authority Buckinghamshire Council published its first modern slavery statement in April 2020 in *advance* of the financial year 2020-2021 and could not include previous activities.

- 2.4 The Modern Slavery Statement in this report seeks to address this discrepancy and reflects on the activities carried out in the two previous financial years; **2020- 2021** and **2021-2022**. It also highlights the actions we intended to complete during 2021-2022 and our objectives for the next financial year 2022-2023. In future and as good practice, we will report within 6 months of the end of our financial year.
- 2.5 The [BHRE assessment](#) published in September 2020 highlights good practice for council Modern Slavery Statements with a useful checklist at the end of the report. An assessment of our existing statement was undertaken against this guidance to consider any areas of improvement.
- 2.6 Our revised statement also follows good practice set out by similar organisations, using the same format as the Government’s most recent Modern Slavery Statement and the University of Nottingham’s Modern Slavery Statement (produced in conjunction with the [University of Nottingham Rights Lab](#))
- 2.7 One element of good practice is the need to reviews aims, goals and key performance indicators annually, with distinct future goals. Specific future actions have been added into our Modern Slavery Statement accordingly. A proposed performance indicator for the next year is that; **‘Identified commissioners and contract managers have attended modern slavery and exploitation training in 2022-2023’**. This training is already delivered, managed and monitored by staff within the Procurement and Contract Management team.
- 2.8 In developing the Modern Slavery Statement, engagement was undertaken with representatives from the following service areas; Human Resources and Organisational Development, Legal, Procurement and Contract Management, Joint Commissioning, Children’s Social Care and Adult Social Care
- 2.9 In addition, the Safer Buckinghamshire Board, Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board have also been informed of the revised statement.

3. Next steps and review

- 3.1 One of the requirements for Modern Slavery Statements is that they are signed, dated and published in a prominent location on an organisation’s website. Once approved, Buckinghamshire Council’s Modern Slavery Statement will be published on the homepage of the Council’s website.
- 3.2 The Home Office has also launched the [Government modern slavery statement registry](#) to make it easier for people to find Modern Slavery Statements. Buckinghamshire Council’s Modern Slavery Statement will be added to this registry.

4. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 4.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

