**Modern slavery statement**

**PART A: Introduction**

1. South Tyneside Council is committed to understanding and mitigating the risks of slavery and human trafficking in our corporate activities and supply chains.

2. By publishing an annual transparency statement, detailing activities undertaken over the latest financial year relating to Modern Slavery mitigation, the Council can keep stakeholders up to date and ensure continued compliance with the obligations arising from section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

**Organisational Structure and Supply Chains:**

3. This statement covers the activities and supply chains of South Tyneside Council, including direct employees of the Council and services delivered on behalf of the Council by third party organisations, and our arms-length management organisation, South Tyneside Homes. More information about the Council structure and governance is available in the [Council Constitution](https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/1335/Constitution).

**Areas of operation and supply and high-risk activities:**

4. South Tyneside Council operates within the United Kingdom, which is considered at low risk of slavery and human trafficking, relative to other parts of the world. While the Council has a high level of confidence that policies and processes are in place to protect against risks of slavery in the supply chains with regards to Tier 1 suppliers, it is more difficult to be confident about links further up the supply chain. Higher risk categories identified by the procurement team include: cleaning, events catering, construction (particularly demolition, asbestos removal, groundworks, clearance/stripping work), clothing manufacture (particularly involving imported textiles), security (manned guards), domestic furniture supply and manufacture, environmental (waste management, recycling), horticultural (grounds maintenance and plant nurseries), some social care/personal services (including taxis), recruitment (agency staff provision, particularly into some of the other areas on this list), and dry imported foods (rice, cocoa, etc).

5. Intelligence indicates that a small number of Modern Slavery incidents have taken place within South Tyneside and the wider North East area over the last year, involving the police and Home Office, although none have required a Council response. The Council remains vigilant to the ongoing threat of Modern Slavery and to the potential that Modern Slavery could be taking place undetected in South Tyneside.

6. South Tyneside Council engages in a wide range of business activities, from refuse collection to the delivery of social care. None of these sectors are classified as high risk for labour exploitation. However, certain frontline workers, such as those in housing, environment health or public health, particularly those working with vulnerable populations and undertaking checks on private premises, may be more likely to encounter victims or perpetrators. The South Tyneside Modern Slavery Strategy sets out ways to raise awareness amongst these service areas and engage staff to help us tackle modern slavery.

**Responsibility:**

7. Each Head of Service is responsible for ensuring risks of Modern Slavery are understood and mitigated against in their service area, and for using appropriate resources to prevent and disrupt slavery and to support and protect victims. A cross-service Modern Slavery Coordination Group meets on a quarterly basis to identify opportunities for and progress improvements relating to combating modern slavery in the South Tyneside area and in the Council's business and supply lines.

8. Any concerns regarding modern slavery or human trafficking in the organisation or supply chains should be raised with the Corporate Director of Business and Resources.

**PART B: Modern slavery policies and initiatives implemented to date**

9. South Tyneside Council has a number of policies in place which protect employees and supply lines against the risk of modern slavery within the organisation. These include:

* **Employee Code of Conduct** - Enshrined within the Council Constitution, this code sets out actions and behaviours expected of employees when representing the organisation.
* **'Speak Out' Whistleblowing Policy** - This policy supports employees, contractors and partners with concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice these concerns.
* **Equality and Diversity Policies** - The Council has two Equality and Diversity Policies, one for employees and one for residents, which outline a commitment to achieving equality of opportunity and a respect for diversity in all areas of council business. These policies aim to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; promote equality of opportunity; promote equality of access; and promote good relations between diverse communities.
* **Recruitment Policies** - The Council has a range of robust, transparent and regularly-reviewed procedures in place for the recruitment and vetting of new employees, ensuring they are able to confirm their identities and qualifications, and that they are paid directly into an appropriate, personal bank account.
* **Living Wage** - Following an Independent Wage Commission, in 2015 South Tyneside Council became one of the first councils in the North East of England to commit to paying all employees the National Living Wage.
* **Responsible Procurement** - responsible procurement, as set out in the South Tyneside Council Procurement Strategy, is an integral duty in the Council's procurement process, ensuring ethical, honest and fair procurement.
* **Safeguarding Policies and Procedures**- The South Tyneside Safeguarding Children and Adults Partnership (STSCAP) maintains and adheres to a library of policies, procedures and best practice (<https://www.southtynesidesafeguardingappp.co.uk/>)

10. In May 2019, South Tyneside Council launched a comprehensive [Modern slavery strategy [318KB]](https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/media/1176/Modern-slavery-strategy/pdf/Item_7_-_Appendix_Modern_Slavery_Strategy_2_1.pdf?m=637810573502370000) which sets out actions to be taken to reduce the risks of slavery within our services, businesses, supply chains and communities. This Strategy is in the process of being refreshed.

11.The Strategy goes beyond the minimum statutory requirements of setting out actions taken to mitigate internal business and supply chain risks, by also setting out plans to strengthen the Council's First Responder and community safety roles, as well as setting out ambitions to leverage the Council's influence and networks to increase community and local business awareness of risks and signs of exploitation.

12. This transparency statement provides an annual opportunity to set out progress made against the ambitions presented in the South Tyneside Modern Slavery Strategy and the associated work programme of the Modern Slavery Coordination Group.

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Identify**

**What we said we would do:**

* Raise awareness of indicators of modern slavery with all frontline staff who may be in a position to recognise signs as part of their day to day work
* Agree and communicate clear and effective pathways for employees, residents and partners to report concerns and to share intelligence, including soft intelligence

**What we have achieved:**

* Offered a Modern Slavery E-Learning module to all staff and Elected Members as part of the online internal staff e-learning suite
* Via Multi Agency Training, offered and seen an increase in the uptake of a specific multi agency e-learning training offer, which was expanded to address key areas of concerns exacerbated by Covid-19, including county lines exploitation.
* Via internal all-staff emails, highlighted the e-Learning course and shared basic guidance with all Council employees on how to recognise signs of slavery and trafficking to all staff and how to report concerns relating to adults and children
* Offered comprehensive safeguarding awareness training to help relevant staff identify and report incidences or indicators of abuse and neglect, including modern slavery or trafficking
* Circulated enhanced and service-specific training resources to relevant managers
* Continued with awareness raising and preventative work around all areas of abuse with a focus on additional areas of concern including county lines and slavery, including:
	+ Holding annual (virtual) Missing, Slavery, Exploited and Trafficked Roadshows, involving key speakers and experts in the field and engaging multi agency papers, raising awareness of current local, regional and national themes including county lines and cuckooing, mate crime and grooming/exploitation.
	+ Participating in National CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) Awareness Day

**Areas for future action:**

* Make available resources such as posters and brochures in appropriate locations accessible to promote awareness among non-desk-based staff
* Deliver in-person Modern Slavery training to Elected Members
* Explore options to make e-learning module mandatory for particular groups of staff

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Respond**

**What we said we would do:**

Embed the South Tyneside Modern Slavery Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET) Response Plan

**What we have achieved:**

* Reviewed Modern Slavery Trafficking and Exploitation response plan, updated contact details and widely shared plan (following a multi-agency testing exercise)
* Reviewed and re-communicated internal mechanisms relating to sharing concerns and soft intelligence (within the Safeguarding Partnership)

**Areas for future action:**

* Refresh Modern Slavery Strategy to ensure alignment with MSET Response Plan and relevance to Response partners

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Support**

**What we said we would do:**

Deliver appropriate training to relevant staff on how to work with, and the rights of, potential victims

**What we have achieved:**

* Established a Complex Abuse Senior Practitioner with Children's Social Care to take a lead on cases involving complex abuse including slavery, trafficking and other forms of exploitation
* Established an Exploitation Champions group within Children's Social Care, with champions in each children's social care team to act as a conduit for any new information or intelligence that has been received.
* Contributed financially to the creation of a regional multi agency exploitation hub with operations over the Northumbria Police area,
* Maintained and developed PRE MSET & MSET (Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficked) subgroups of the Safeguarding Partnership, with the pre-MSET ensuring data and local exploitation profile oversight of all cases potentially concerning missing, slavery, exploitation or trafficking issues in the context of information between police, children and families social care and adult social care. The MSET ensuring effective multi agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of those children, young people and adults who have been identified as medium or high risk on the exploitation framework for screening, assessment, safeguarding, disruption and review.

**Areas for future action:**

Refresh Modern Slavery Strategy, leveraging insight and expertise from both Children's and Adults Social Care professionals

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Disrupt**

**What we said we would do:**

Deliver training to relevant teams to ensure staff understand their role to support police disruption operations and how they can maximise evidence preservation and increase chances of prosecution.

**What we have achieved:**

Circulated function-specific Modern Slavery mitigation resources and advice to relevant managers (via Coordination Group)

**Areas for future action:**

Refresh Modern Slavery Strategy, leveraging insights and expertise from Environmental Health and Development Services professionals

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Prevent**

**What we said we would do:**

Engage Procurement, HR and Commissioning to commit to ongoing and proactive efforts to mitigate risks of slavery in the supply chain, including by communicating clear expectations for suppliers and providers.

**What we have achieved:**

* Ensured Modern Slavery Act 2015 compliance is a routine part of all procurement due diligence, through requiring suppliers to confirm annual modern slavery reporting requirements and declare any trafficking offences as part of the Supplier Selection Questionnaire
* Circulated function-specific Modern Slavery mitigation resources and advice (including guidance relating to recruitment and supply chain risk assessments) to relevant managers
* Explored options to further strengthen risk assessment and ongoing monitoring of established contracts
* Refreshed Council Responsible Procurement policies
* Ensured Modern Slavery is a key consideration within the refreshed Procurement Strategy (2021-2024)

**Areas for future action:**

* Further develop and embed processes to ensure ongoing monitoring of established contracts
* Promote the use of socially responsible employers through our procurement policies

**Modern Slavery strategy action areas - Engage**

**What we said we would do:**

Complement national modern slavery awareness campaigns with local approach, leveraging communications capacity and partnerships to raise awareness and equip residents and businesses to be able to recognise and respond to indicators of Modern Slavery.

**What we have achieved:**

Shared advice and information on Modern Slavery with residents, including via the Residents Newsletter

**Areas for future action:**

Share national campaign resources

**PART C: Practical Guidance on Slavery and Trafficking**

**Recognising modern day slavery and trafficking:**

The true extent of modern slavery is unknown, but there are estimated to be between 10-13,000 victims of slavery and trafficking currently in the UK and millions worldwide.

Victims are forced against their will to work for little or no pay for the benefit of others. They are often abused or threatened and stripped of their rights.

There is no typical victim of slavery. Victims can be men, women or children of all ages and nationalities. Many victims are foreign nationals who are brought into the UK specifically so that they can be exploited for the benefit of others. However, a high number of victims are UK nationals, including children.

Modern slavery crimes take place in many different sectors and workplaces, including factories, fields, retail or service units, and within private homes.

Crimes of modern slavery have taken place all over the country.  Intelligence suggests that includes within South Tyneside.

The coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdowns have served both to increase health risks for victims and make detection of the crime harder for authorities.

**Key indicators of potential trafficking include:**

* Is the person in possession of their own passport, identification or travel documents or are these documents in possession of someone else?
* Does the person act if they were instructed or coached by someone else? Do they allow others to speak for them when spoken to directly?
* Was the person recruited for one purpose and forced to engage in some other job? Have transport costs been paid for by facilitators, whom they must pay back through working or providing services?
* Does the person receive little or no payment for their work? Is someone else in control of their earnings?
* Does the victim have freedom of movement? Are they dropped off and collected from work?
* Is the person withdrawn or do they appear frightened?
* Has the person or their family been threatened with harm if they attempt to escape?
* Is the person under the impression they are bonded by debt, or in a situation of dependence?
* Has the person been physically or emotionally harmed or deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities?
* Can the person freely contact friends or family? Do they have limited social interaction or contact with people outside their immediate environment?

**What to do if you encounter or suspect modern day slavery or trafficking?**

In the first instance the point of contact for all modern slavery crimes should be the local police force. If you have information about a potential modern slavery crime that requires an immediate response (such as where victims are at risk) dial 999.

If you hold information that could lead to the identification, discovery and recovery of victims in the UK, you can contact the Modern Slavery Helpline on 0800 0121 700. Alternatively, you can make calls anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If you have concerns or suspect that an adult is at risk of harm or abuse, you can call South Tyneside's Let's Talk single point of contact for Adult Safeguarding:

* 0191 424 6000 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am until 5pm and Friday 8:30am until 4:30pm)
* 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)

If you have concerns or suspect that a child is at risk of harm or abuse, is being trafficked or enslaved, you can call South Tyneside's single point of contact for Children's Safeguarding at:

* 0191 424 5010 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am until 5pm and Friday 8.30am until 4:30pm)
* 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)