
Modern Slavery Statement 2020/21

This statement is made in accordance to s.54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It sets out the steps that Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has taken, and is continuing to take, to ensure that modern slavery and human trafficking is not taking place within our organisation, our partners, our sub-contractors or supply chain.

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, human trafficking and forced labour. The Council has a zero tolerance approach to any form of modern slavery. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity and transparency in all business dealings and to ensuring effective systems and controls are in place to safeguard against any form of modern slavery taking place within the organisation or supply chain.

Our business

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is a unitary local authority, serving a population of 183,100 residents. The Council spends around £150m per year on purchasing services, supplies and works contracts to meet the delivery of services to the public. The Council employs around 1,800 staff to provide a huge range of services to fulfil statutory and discretionary services for residents, businesses, visitors and partners.

In addition to the Council's responsibilities as an employer, it is committed under [s.52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking. Southend-on-Sea is located on the Thames Estuary with a long coastline. As such it is close to Tilbury docks, DP World London Gateway and Harwich docks. Southend has an airport and is close to London meaning there are several transport and access routes for consideration in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking.

Our areas of focus

We deem particular areas of focus within the Council to include children and adult services, housing (including social and private sector housing), environmental health, education, and licencing. Homeless people or those at risk of homelessness are at higher risk of exploitation and falling prey to modern slavery.

We recognise that other areas of focus in the borough include (*but are not limited to) restaurants, car valeting services, the sex trade and affiliated establishments, the construction industry (including sub-contractors) and forced or arranged marriages.

Our policies

The Council reviews its policies and procedures on a regular basis and operates a number of internal policies to ensure we are conducting business in an ethical and transparent manner and in compliance with the Modern Slavery Act. These include:

1. The [Modern Slavery Guidance](#) sets out the organisation's stance on modern slavery and explains how employees can identify any instances of this and where they can go for help. The guidance should be read alongside Southend, Essex and Thurrock [\(SET\) Safeguarding Adults Guidelines](#) and the [\(SET\) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures](#).
2. We operate a robust 'Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy', including conducting eligibility to work in the UK checks for all employees to safeguard against human trafficking or individuals being forced to work against their will.
3. The Procurement Team is responsible for ensuring all procurement activity complies with the Council's 'Contract Procedure Rules' and wider 'Public Contract Regulations 2015'.
4. We operate a 'Whistleblowing Policy' so that all employees know that they can raise concerns about how colleagues are being treated, or practices within our business or supply chain, without fear of reprisals.
5. Our 'Code of Conduct' explains the manner in which we behave as an organisation and how we expect our employees and suppliers to act.

Our suppliers

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council operates a supplier policy and maintains a database of registered suppliers as well as a corporate contract register. We conduct due diligence on all suppliers before allowing them to become a contractual supplier. This due diligence may include an online search to ensure that a particular organisation has never been convicted of offences relating to modern slavery [and on site audits which include a review of working conditions]. Our anti-slavery policy forms part of our contract with suppliers and they are required to confirm that no part of their business operations contradicts this policy.

In addition to the above, as part of our contract with suppliers, we require that they confirm to us that:

- They comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015: Requirements under Modern Slavery Act 2015.

- They are a relevant commercial organisation as defined by section 54 ("Transparency in supply chains etc.") of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 ("the Act").
- If they answer yes to the previous question, are they compliant with the annual reporting requirements contained within section 54 of the Act 2015.

Training

Corporate Procurement provides training across the business to cover the Corporate Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs). Within the CPRs are ethical procurement requirements that link to the procurement process which tests suppliers on their compliance with the Modern Slavery Act.

In addition, Corporate Procurement has a Contract Management Framework in place and is in the process of finalising the building and testing of a corporate electronic contract management system which will be key to ensuring suppliers are monitored in terms of compliance and regular reminders are made to suppliers to provide evidence as to how they are operating their contracts. A number of advisors within the Corporate Procurement Team have completed specific training around Modern Slavery as this is an element of formal CIPS qualifications.

Council representatives across all service areas continue to attend refreshers, ad-hoc training, events and conferences hosted by partner or external organisations. Over the last year this has included Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking training hosted by Stop the Traffik on 7 March 2019, attended by 17 Council delegates and the Southend Against Modern Slavery (SAMS) partnership event for World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July 2019. Additionally, the Rah Rah Theatre Company's awareness raising for frontline workers on 16 October 2019 was attended by 35 Council delegates, as well as colleagues attending the Eastern Region Anti-Slavery Partnership conference on 21 January 2020.

The Council, in partnership with Essex and Kent Police, facilitated a stakeholder event, attended by 25 delegates, on 30 January 2020 to map the journey of potential victims of modern slavery in Southend, enhance networks between statutory agencies and the third sector and share knowledge and best practice. The Council provided, in partnership with Stop the Traffik and the SAMS partnership, modern slavery and human trafficking training on 24 February 2020, attended by 20 delegates. The Council and the SAMS partnership also jointly facilitated three modern slavery and human trafficking awareness raising sessions in July 2020, attended by 89 frontline professionals.

Next steps

We will further embed the importance of the Modern Slavery Act into our business and supply chain procedures, ensuring that our activities and that of our suppliers are

committed to complying with the requirements of the Act. We will continue to monitor and audit our policies and procedures to make amendments and update staff where necessary.

The Council continues to work with and support the activities of the SAMS partnership, an organisation which identifies and partners with key community stakeholders, mobilises communities and raises awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking in the community.

To ensure the borough is protected from violence and criminal behaviour, we continue to combine the efforts of strategic partnership boards; (Southend Safeguarding Partnership / Health and Well-Being Board / Community Safety Partnership) through the 'Violence and Vulnerability Group' that draws on the Boards expertise, knowledge and spheres of influence, one that reflects our determination to keep Southend-on-Sea safe and thriving.

Additionally, as a direct result of covid-19, a monthly strategic group comprising of the Council and key stakeholders has been taking place since April 2020 to help identify and provide support to individuals and families at risk of modern slavery. The group has developed and implemented an updated action plan which sets out key priorities and work streams to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking in Southend.

This statement is made under section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 for the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

Approval for this statement

This statement was approved by



Councillor Ian Gilbert, Leader of the Council



Alison Griffin, Chief Executive Southend-on-Sea Borough Council