

Modern Slavery Statement

2024-2025

This statement has been published in accordance with Section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It sets out the steps taken by Winchester City Council to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in its own business, supply chains, and linked business activities. The council has a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and is committed to ensuring it does not exist in its district or supply chains.

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery is an umbrella term that covers human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour. Slaves are sold and treated as “property,” forced to work for little or no pay, live in fear and squalor, have their freedom restricted and are at the mercy of their employers. It most commonly takes the form of:

- Sexual exploitation
- Forced labour
- Forced criminality
- Organ harvesting
- Domestic servitude
- Debt bondage / financial exploitation

Anyone can become a victim of modern slavery. Modern slavery has been found to be taking place in farms, care homes, nail bars, hotels, car washes and domestic settings across the UK.

In the year proceeding June 2023, there were 253 potential modern slavery victims identified across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (Modern Slavery Partnership, HLOW). This is an increase from 195 cases in 2019¹.

Organisational structure

Winchester City Council is a district council within the county of Hampshire consisting of an urban city centre surrounded by smaller market towns and large rural areas. The council directly employs around 450 members of staff.

The council is responsible for a broad range of statutory and non-statutory services to residents and businesses across the district. This includes local planning management and development control, household waste and recycling, administering and collecting council tax, providing social housing to council tenants, environmental health, off street parking enforcement and licensing.

¹ [Modern Slavery Partnership - Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner \(hampshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk)

This statement applies to all the council’s activities (including those undertaken by external contractors and partners) but acknowledges that some face higher risks of modern slavery than others.

Partnerships

The council works in partnership with a number of agencies in order to combat modern slavery, including, but not limited to:

- Winchester Community Safety Partnership
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Hampshire County Council
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight (HIOW) Modern Slavery Partnership

The HIOW Modern Slavery Partnership aims to raise awareness of modern slavery, identify and support victims, and pursue perpetrators. It provides guidance, training, and best practice to partners across the county to ensure that all organisations are equipped to tackle the issue. More information can be found on their [website](#).

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of the risks and report any concerns regarding modern slavery to an appropriate individual.

Winchester City Council’s Corporate Safeguarding Group is led by the council’s Designated Safeguarding Lead. It also consists of a Lead Advisor for Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) concerns, and a Lead Advisor for PREVENT concerns. These individuals work together to mitigate against the risks of modern slavery.

Policies:

The council reviews its policies and procedures on a regular basis to ensure they remain compliant and fit for purpose. The following policies are considered key to meeting the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Safeguarding	The council is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults. The council has multiple trained safeguarding leads and participates in multi-agency partnerships to protect members of the public.
Recruitment	The council’s recruitment procedures are designed to recruit staff in a fair and consistent way that supports equality of opportunity in line with the Equality Act 2010. Any offer of employment is made subject to a consistent range of checks including eligibility to work in the UK, identity confirmation, and satisfactory references. The council only uses established and reputable employment agencies to source labour and will always verify the practices of any new agency before accepting workers.

Pay	The council operates a job evaluation scheme to ensure all employees are paid fair and equitably in line with the Equality Act 2010. The council's pay policy is based on fairness, affordability, consistency, flexibility, market rates, and to encourage and reward achievement. The council is an accredited Living Wage Employer.
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)	The council is committed to equality of opportunity throughout its role as both an employer and service provider. This is important for identifying modern slavery as it is more likely to victimise young people, women and girls, people who speak little English people with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems, and other historically marginalised groups.
Whistleblowing	<p>The council's Whistleblowing Policy is part of its corporate governance arrangements and forms part of a wider anti-fraud, corruption and bribery strategy.</p> <p>The council encourages staff, contractors, and elected Members who have serious concerns about any aspect of the council's activities to come forward and voice those concerns. This includes any circumstances which may give rise to an enhanced risk of slavery, social exploitation, or human trafficking. The council is committed to ensuring that whistleblowers will suffer no victimisation as a result of raising such concerns.</p>
Code of Conduct	The council has a code of conduct for both employees and members that clearly establishes the actions and behaviours expected when representing the council.
Procurement	The council's Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2020-2025 commits to promoting and endorsing the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 through its procurement activity and contractual arrangements.

Our supply chain

Winchester City Council aims for transparency throughout its procurement activity and promotes the highest standards of integrity and fairness in its supply chains. Equality, social responsibility, and safety are all important criteria in the procurement of goods, works and services and are promoted in its Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2020-25.

The council has four guiding principles which form the key elements of its approach to procurement and contract management activity, and these are:

- Value – competition and best value, collaboration, commercialisation
- Compliance – Public Contracts Regulations 2015, accountability and probity and openness
- Environmental and Social – Sustainability and carbon reduction, technology, proportionate and relevant
- Fairness – local economy, transparency, equality and diversity

Suppliers to the council must abide by all relevant employment legislation, regulation, including the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Procurement regulations have been amended to make certain offences under the Modern Slavery Act as grounds for the mandatory exclusion of bidders from public procurements and this is reflected in the council's tender documentation.

Where relevant to the subject matter of the contract, contractors must have suitable safeguarding procedures, policies, and training in place.

Where there are questions over the conduct of a supplier these shall be investigated, and the appropriate action taken. To avoid moving the problem elsewhere and creating an environment of concealment, contracts will not automatically end if modern slavery fears arise – the council will support contractors with ensuring our zero tolerance to modern slavery is reflected by everyone we work with.

Training

All staff are required to complete an e-learning training package on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as part of their induction programme. Councillors receive the same training as part of their induction, and this is refreshed every 3 years.

All council staff who have contact with members of the public are required to complete classroom based Basic Safeguarding Awareness training which encompasses modern slavery. This is undertaken within 6 months of new employees starting and is refreshed every 3 years for other employees.

Further support

If you think you have been a victim of modern slavery, or you believe someone else is, you can reach out to the following organisations for support.

- Modern Slavery helpline (24/7 information and support): 0800 121 700
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111 (can be anonymous)
- Salvation Army 24/7 helpline: 0800 808 3733
- Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: 0800 432 0804
- Medaille Trust: 0800 06 666 16 (for more information on spotting the signs of modern slavery and to discuss potential issues in your community).

Review

The council will review its Modern Slavery Statement on an annual basis or more frequently in the case of legislative or significant organisational structure changes.

We will continue to monitor, review and update our policies and procedures to make amendments and update staff where required.

This statement will be published on the Winchester City Council website.

Statement Approval

This statement is made under Section 54 (1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 for the financial year 2024-2025.

This statement was approved at Executive Leadership Board on 3rd July 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'L'.

Laura Taylor

Chief Executive

4th July 2024