

MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT



Introduction

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal exploitation, organ harvesting and human trafficking.

The Modern Slavery Act came into force in 2015. As a public body, it is good practice for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) to produce and publish a Modern Slavery Statement outlining potential modern slavery risks and detailing plans in place to mitigate these risks.

The Authority is committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities, and ensuring that its supply chains are free from slavery and human trafficking.

Arrangements are in place for concerns or suspicions surrounding modern slavery to be reported in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act (2015).

Period covered by this statement

This statement is the Authority's first Modern Slavery Statement. This statement relates to actions and activities during the financial year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 and sets out compliance with the requirements of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This statement sets out the Authority's commitment to ensure it does not actively encourage nor support slavery or human trafficking within the organisation, business activities or within supply chains.

Scope of this statement

The Authority is made up of 28 elected members from six constituent local authorities and provides direction and governance for the delivery of services across North Wales. The North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) delivers the day to day activities to achieve the Authority's objectives.

The Service deals with a wide-range of emergencies, from house fires and road traffic collisions, to floods and chemical spills. Extensive work is carried out with schools, businesses and local communities to promote fire safety and prevention and to help keep people and property safe.

Service structure

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is one of three fire and rescue Services in Wales. The Service helps to protect an estimated population of 678,461 people over an area of 2,400 square miles as well as hundreds of thousands of tourists and visitors to North Wales every year.

The Service employs almost 900 staff in operational and support roles. The Executive Group, comprising of the Chief Fire Officer, three Assistant Chief Fire Officers and an Assistant Chief Officer are responsible for ensuring the day-to-day running of the Service.

The Core Values demonstrate the Service's commitment to valuing people by practising and promoting fairness, respect, and being committed to honesty, integrity and mutual trust. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's relationships with suppliers and decision-making in connection with the Service's supply chain are important factors in earning and maintaining that trust with both employees and the wider community.

Relevant Policies

The Service is committed to meeting the aims of the Act and has the following policies in place that support its commitment:

Whistleblowing Policy – The Service encourages employees to maintain the highest standards of conduct throughout the organisation. The Whistleblowing Policy enables employees to draw attention to any concerns that they may have. Employees can raise a concern via the Whistleblowing Manager by calling a confidential Whistleblowing telephone number with a 24-hour message service, by contacting a dedicated Whistleblowing email address or by writing to the Whistleblowing Manager.

Procurement Policy – Working in partnership, North Wales Police provide procurement services to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service via a Service Level Agreement. North Wales Police, on behalf of the Service, are committed to ensuring that suppliers adhere to the highest ethical standards. Suppliers are required to demonstrate that they provide safe working conditions where necessary, treat workers with dignity and respect, and act ethically within the law. It is made clear to suppliers that North Wales Police, acting on behalf of the Service, will not tolerate slavery and human trafficking in supply chains or any part of the organisation. The right is reserved to terminate agreements with any third party found to have engaged in unfair employment practices.

Discipline Handbook – The Handbook makes it clear to employees the standard of behaviour expected of them. The Service strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour at all times. Diversity and inclusivity are one of the Service's Core Values, enabling people to reach their full potential no matter what their background or circumstances, through promotion of equal opportunities and by challenging prejudice and discrimination.

Safeguarding - in light of the role of the Service in terms of operational incidents and community engagement in respect of fire safety and prevention, the Service has implemented a Safeguarding Policy to promote welfare and protect from harm. The policy details the roles and responsibilities of all employees in relation to the safeguarding of adults and children who are suffering from, or are at risk of abuse, neglect or self-neglect including modern slavery and human trafficking.

Recruitment – All employees that work for the Service are in receipt of at least the UK minimum wage and as part of the recruitment process will undergo immigration and pre-employment checks in accordance with Government guidance. When sourcing temporary staff via an agency assurance is sought on the use of the UK minimum wage and immigration checks. DBS checks are carried out on all employees.

Equality and Diversity Policy - The Policy aims to provide diversity and equality to all in employees and raises awareness and details how the Service aims to create a safe and inclusive atmosphere for employees and service users.

Complaints Management Policy – The Policy details the Service's commitment to the principles of accountability, quality and customer care. The policy provides a consistent approach for dealing with complaints from the public, allowing the Service to, where appropriate, correct behaviour, procedures or policy, to enable the highest standard of service to be maintained.

Grievance Policy - The Policy outlines how employees can seek redress for any grievance that may arise in relation to their employment.

Job Evaluation and Pay Policy – The Service operates a job evaluation scheme to ensure that all employees are paid fair and equitably. The software assesses jobs through an objective, systematic process using a consistent set of factors, skills and requirements to align compensation strategies ensuring a fair and transparent process.

Training

All employees are required to undertake mandatory training in relation to safeguarding those at risk, many of whom encounter members of the public as part of their duties and how to report suspected slavery or human trafficking activity. Training is undertaken via an e-learning package on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which encompasses modern slavery.

Managing supply chains

The Service takes its responsibilities as a purchaser seriously and has acted to ensure that its suppliers meet rigorous ethical standards in order to ensure that supply chains are free from slavery.

Through partnership working, both North Wales Police and the Service are committed to the promotion of ethical sourcing by:

- Expecting suppliers to support working conditions that are legal, fair and safe;
- Requiring suppliers and their sub-contractors to meet ethical sourcing standards to ensure transparency in the supply chain, this includes meeting new and established legal standards.

The Service adheres to the Code of Practice - Ethical Employment in Supply Chains which was developed to support the development of more ethical public sector supply chains.

Due diligence and risk management

The Service is committed to ensuring contracts are compliant with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

For all contracts with organisations to whom the requirements of Part 6 of the Modern Slavery Act applies, the organisation's Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement must be reviewed as part of the tender process to ensure that any risks are suitably addressed.

Efforts are taken to monitor and reduce the risk of slavery and human trafficking occurring within the supply chain. Most purchases are against existing supply contracts or frameworks e.g. the National Procurement Service, which have been negotiated and have the requirement for suppliers to have suitable anti-slavery and human trafficking policies and processes in place.

As part of the tendering process, potential suppliers must complete a self-declaration questionnaire which seeks confirmation and assurances of their compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the nature of checks made on their own supply chain.

Action Plan

During 2020/21, the Service has:

- Developed, ratified and published a Safeguarding Policy;
- Developed and provided training on safeguarding which is a mandatory requirement for all employees;
- Produced the Service's first Modern Slavery Statement; and
- Reviewed and updated the Whistleblowing Policy.

During 2021/22, the Service will:

- Consider appropriate procurement training to support implementation of the Service's ethical sourcing approach;
- Engage with key suppliers to better understand their actions to mitigate risk and using influence to encourage those suppliers who fall short of their obligations to take action;
- Ensure that suppliers are asked if they have a Modern Slavery Statement as part of the tender process; and
- Review the Equality and Diversity Policy.

This statement was approved on 22nd June 2021 by the Fire Authority.

The statement will be reviewed and updated annually.