

West Sussex County Council
Declaration of intent to tackle Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Modern slavery includes human trafficking, domestic servitude, forced labour or criminality and sexual exploitation.

The complexity and crossovers with other crime areas makes it very difficult to quantify the scale of those living in modern day slavery. Individuals may be trafficked into, out of or within the UK.

There are more slaves worldwide today than at the height of the Atlantic slave trade in the 18th Century. In 2013 the Home Office estimated there were over 13,000 modern slaves in the UK. It is likely however, to be many times this number today. A study of modern-day slavery by the Walk Free Foundation says there could be two slaves for every 1,000 people in the UK - amounting to 136,000 victims across the country.

Modern slavery is a hidden crime, and it is closer than we think. It is happening in every corner of the country, and that includes West Sussex.

West Sussex County Council as part of Local Government and as an employer, commissioner and contractor of other bodies, recognises that it has a responsibility to take a robust approach to slavery and human trafficking. The Council acknowledges its duty to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking. The relevant sections of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 are Sections 43, 52 and 54. The Council is absolutely committed to preventing and taking action against identified slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities, its supply chains and the wider community.

Building on this, West Sussex County Council is pleased to adopt this declaration of intent which will be the council's response to the horror of modern-day slavery and human trafficking and serve as the basis of future policies and procedures to tackle it.

Statements of intent

- WSCC abhors the vile and brutal crime of modern slavery and human trafficking in which people are treated like commodities and exploited for criminal gain. The council will do everything in its power to work with Sussex Police and other law enforcement agencies to help disrupt and bring to justice perpetrators of such crimes across the county.
- WSCC will adopt a victim-focused approach to modern slavery and human trafficking and endeavour to safeguard such individuals - whether they be children or adults – and provide for their health and wellbeing needs while they are in the care of the council
- WSCC will do all in its power to avoid any element of modern slavery and human trafficking in its procurement process or its procurement supply chain. In accordance with Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 WSCC will produce a Transparency Statement to this effect.

- WSCC is fully aware of its designation as a First Responder Organisation under the National Referral Mechanism and its responsibility to identify potential victims and refer cases to the Single Competent Authority.
- WSCC is aware of the need to train its staff to the highest possible level to ensure they are able to rescue and care for victims and refer them into the National Referral Mechanism should the victim consent to do so.
- WSCC is working with the Sussex Anti-Slavery Network to ensure that all local authorities (including districts and boroughs) develop and deliver appropriate First Responder Training to staff.
- WSCC will publish support guides and the Modern Slavery Helpline number and other helpful information on its corporate website to help victims, staff and other citizens to report incidents of modern slavery.
- WSCC will discharge its statutory duty to safeguard any children who they believe are a victim of modern slavery or who are being trafficked into, out of, or across the county.
- WSCC will actively seek to work in partnership with government, Sussex Police, National Health Service, other law enforcement agencies, community and voluntary sector organisations, and any other bodies or organisations working to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking.
- WSCC will work closely with the Anti-Slavery Commissioner to help improve the plights of victims, improve and enhance the support provided by the National Referral Mechanism, and seek to lobby Parliament to help bring changes to improve current legislation and encourage the development of new legislation should that prove necessary.
- WSCC will work with Sussex Police to share intelligence and to help engage with Sussex Police to disrupt modern slavery and human trafficking activity when and where the council become aware of it.
- WSCC is fully aware that under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, it has a Duty to Notify in relation to anyone who is believed to be a victim – both adults and children – of human trafficking (including internal trafficking within the UK) and is willing and keen to do so.
- WSCC is willing to share appropriate data with all agencies to help tackle this issue. WSCC will put in place any additional data sharing arrangements or Memorandum of Understanding as required as well as utilising powers under the Crime & Disorder Act 1988.
- WSCC will continue to maintain a Modern Slavery Operational Group to develop policy and procedures and oversee the WSCC response to modern slavery and human trafficking. This Group will be responsible for ensuring the delivery and implementation of the intentions set out in this document.

- Further to the items specified above, WSCC is more than willing to take whatever further steps it deems fit to help address the whole issue of modern slavery and human trafficking and help protect victims, disrupt criminal activity and work closely with Sussex Police and other agencies to bring to justice perpetrators of this abhorrent crime.

Dated: September 2020