

Sheffield City Council Modern Slavery Strategy

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Sheffield City Council, Modern Slavery Strategy: Summary

1.1 This Strategy sets out Sheffield City Council's approach to tackling modern slavery.

1.2 Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. Perpetrators of modern slavery coerce, deceive and force individuals against their will into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. Across the UK, a large number of organised crime groups are involved in modern slavery, but it is also committed by individual opportunistic perpetrators.

1.3 The introduction of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 imposes an obligation on local authorities to notify the Secretary of State if they have reasonable grounds to believe a person may be a victim of human trafficking or slavery. Raising awareness of this duty amongst council staff is key to identifying the early signs of slavery in their everyday work and knowing what to do about it.

1.4 This strategy (and attached action plan) provides a touchstone for the organisation ensuring that we remain committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in all of our activities.

Our Vision

2.1 Our vision is for everyone in Sheffield to live a safe and happy life free from slavery and exploitation in all its forms.

Our Priorities

3.1 Our vision will be delivered through four priorities, namely to:

- i. embed the Modern Slavery Act into mainstream activity;

- ii. improve awareness, understanding and identification of modern slavery;
- iii. develop a positive protection and support system for victims; and
- iv. hold perpetrators to account and support appropriate prosecutions.

Priority 1: Embed the Modern Slavery Act into mainstream activity

4.1 Modern slavery involves the abuse and coercion of vulnerable people, and as such, constitutes a safeguarding issue. With this in mind, we will:

- secure the strategic commitment of all council departments and relevant local agencies to protect victims and assist with the prosecution of perpetrators;
- maximise links between the policies and strategies that deal with exploitation, homelessness and other relevant issues; and
- ensure that information is shared, both locally and nationally, through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and other channels.

Priority 2: Improve awareness, understanding and identification

5.1 Modern slavery is under-reported. What we do know is that victims are often extremely vulnerable, scared and feel powerless to speak out. It is often up to professionals and members of the community to recognise what is happening and act accordingly. As a council, we will:

- raise awareness across our communities (including faith and voluntary sector) so we can work together to identify where there might be issues, and ensure individuals and communities know what to report, and how to do it;
- train our staff to recognise the signs of modern slavery and know what to do about it, including consistent use of the NRM; and
- maintain an awareness of risk and put measures in place to mitigate them appropriately and effectively.

Priority 3: Develop a positive protection and support system for adult and child victims

6.1 The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) grants a minimum of 45-day reflection and recovery period for victims of human trafficking or modern slavery. That said, the effectiveness and consistency of longer-term support is vital to ensure people are not re-exploited as soon as short-term protection and support comes to an end. We will:

- ensure there are clear and robust safeguarding policies in place to identify and support those affected;
- establish a consistent and co-ordinated operational partnership approach to deal effectively with reports and disclosures as they arise; and
- develop a comprehensive range of services and other options capable of effectively supporting people throughout their recovery.

Priority 4: Hold perpetrators to account

7.1 Modern slavery has a devastating and lasting impact on victims, children and families. Those who perpetrate, or contribute to modern slavery must be held to account in order to protect those who are being harmed, and reduce the risk of future exploitation. We will:

- ensure that partners are able and willing to share information about perpetrators and victims as effectively as possible;
- where possible, provide victims with practical and emotional support throughout the court process;
- actively monitor themes and trends, striving to ensure we are in a position to prevent issues before they happen; and
- support law enforcement partners to disrupt perpetrators.

Oversight and Scrutiny

8.1 Progress will be monitored by Sheffield's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, otherwise known as the Safer and Sustainable Partnership Board and scrutinised by the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.

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