

Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025-2026

This statement sets out Dorset Council's approach to identifying and addressing the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking in its operations and supply chains. This statement is made pursuant to Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes Dorset Council's Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the financial year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Introduction

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. There is no typical victim of slavery. Victims can be men, women, or children of all ages and nationalities. The following definitions are encompassed within the term 'modern slavery' for the purposes of the Modern Slavery Act 2015:

- 'slavery' is where the ownership is exercised over a person
- 'servitude' involves the obligation to provide services imposed by coercion
- 'forced or compulsory labour' involves work or service extracted from any person under menace of a penalty and for which the person has not offered themselves voluntarily
- 'human trafficking' concerns arranging or facilitating the travel of another with a view to exploiting them. It is irrelevant whether the person consents to the travel. Both modern slavery and human trafficking are crimes. Trafficking is not limited to people coming from abroad; it can happen within the UK too (from one region to another).

Our Organisation

Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 was approved by Full Council on 5 December 2024 and is founded on a vision of working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations. This ambitious and bold Council Plan sets out four key priorities to be delivered by 2029 to help us tackle some significant and complex challenges:

- provide high-quality and affordable housing
- grow our economy
- communities for all
- respond to the climate and nature crisis

These priorities are underpinned by our principles of partnership and prevention.

Inclusiveness is the heartbeat of our organisation, and our values are:

- Respect
- Openness
- Together
- Curiosity
- Accountability

We are committed to opposing Modern Slavery in all its forms and recognise the important role we can play as a public sector organisation in its identification and disruption.

Modern slavery is a complex and often hidden crime, requiring a proactive confident response in our efforts to identify and support victims and those vulnerable to exploitation by others.

We do not tolerate any form of Modern Slavery, and we are committed to acting ethically with integrity and transparency in all that we do, whether alongside our internal workforce or externally with partners and suppliers. The council has Safeguarding Slavery Leads (SSLs) located within each Directorate. These roles provide important support, guidance, and signposting when concerns about modern slavery arise.

We have also developed internal guidance and a proportionate risk assessment approach to support the Dorset Council implementation of the National Health Service (Procurement, Slavery and Human Trafficking) Regulations 2025 (which came into force on 17 May 2026). This applies only to procurements for the purposes of health services and goods in England that fall within the scope of the Regulations, including relevant Dorset Council procurements, and does not apply to all Council procurement. We will keep under review the implications of the National Health Service (Procurement, Slavery and Human Trafficking) Regulations 2025, which strengthen risk-based due diligence expectations for goods and services and how this is implemented in the public sector.

We are committed to thoroughly investigating all alerts to potential modern slavery within our provider networks and supply chains, with learning being used to further develop and strengthen practice. This includes questions arising internally or from the public. A cuckooing protocol developed by housing staff alongside third sector and provider partners continue to be developed as it becomes embedded.

The Council is a lead partner of the Pan-Dorset Anti-Slavery Partnership that works collaboratively across both Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils in all matters relating to modern slavery and exploitation. New local self-assessment and performance frameworks have been developed and adopted by all partners. This work is crucial in enabling a coordinated multi-agency response to this complex and multi-faceted crime.

Our Supply Chain

Over half of the Council's annual budget is spent on buying external goods, services and works. Given the scale of our external spend, we recognise the importance of effective procurement processes and contract management that takes measures to identify and mitigate modern slavery within our supply chains.

It is a requirement, within our internal project initiation process (pre-procurement) for project teams to evidence their assessment of modern slavery risk in respect of the requirements to be procured. This includes what would be their approach within the procurement process to address any identified risk, and how it is proposed this will be managed with the eventual supplier in contract.

We will however continue to review and assess our internal commercial activities to ensure we take into consideration the different risks associated in our supply chains, including modern slavery and human trafficking, and that we seek to mitigate these risks. We continue to review our policies and procedures, to ensure that they are effective and appropriate, and we will update these as necessary. However, we recognise such policies and procedures must be proportionate to the size of the commissioning, procurement, contract, or supplier. This includes consideration of the impact of any process on SMEs and VCSEs. In practice this means:

- being proportionate in the overall approach
- ensuring barriers to participating in new commissioning or procurements are not created
- ensuring unnecessary burdens are not placed on SMEs and VCSEs

The use of data and intelligence gathered as part of commercial activity, including early market engagement, will help to assess whether the modern slavery risk is relevant to the subject matter of the contract and shape specification requirements. Knowing the risk of modern slavery guides the approach to contract management and how to work alongside our suppliers to identify and mitigate risk.

Our Policies and Procedures

The current key policies and procedures which contribute to minimising the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in our organisation and our supply chain include the following:

- **Protocol and Guidance for Modern Slavery**

The Council has worked with partners across Dorset to develop the local Modern Slavery Protocol, which sets out how to deal with any potential cases of modern slavery and links to the mandatory responsibilities to notify cases through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

[Protocol and Guidance for Modern Slavery - Dorset Council](#)

- **Commercial Strategy – Commissioning and Procurement**

This strategy is the mechanism to ensure that the commercial approach to commissioning and procurement takes place in accordance with the Council's strategic aims, that it is effective and delivers best value to residents of the Council's local authority area. It is subordinate to the Council's Constitution and is complemented by the Council's Contract Management guidance. The Strategy sets the importance of effective contract management that includes taking measures to identify and mitigate modern day slavery risks in contracts.

[Commercial strategy - commissioning and procurement - Dorset Council](#)

- **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**

This describes the Council's commitment to support and protect whistleblowers, and the steps to be taken to blow the whistle on serious wrong-doing (known as making a 'protected disclosure') and how the Council will respond. It applies to all council employees and other workers; including freelance staff; temporary and agency staff; trainers; volunteers; consultants; and contractors.

[Document Whistleblowing Policy - Dorset Council](#)

- **Safeguarding**

Modern Slavery is included and categorised as a type of harm in the local Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board Procedures.

[Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board - Dorset Council](#)

Tackling child exploitation underpins the councils work on addressing [extra familial risk and harm](#), as part of the [Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).

- **Dorset Council's Equality Scheme**

The Council is committed to the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in both employment and the delivery of services. The Equality Scheme sets out the Council's key quality objectives and demonstrates the work that the Council is doing to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

[Equality scheme - Dorset Council](#)

Training

We have in place for our staff a Safeguarding Learning Pathway that provides understanding on how to protect the rights of others to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect. This pathway gives staff a basic overview of what safeguarding is and how we can all work together to protect the rights of others. This pathway includes Modern Slavery training. Completion of the training is monitored by the Council's Learning and Development Team(s). Staff involved in people related service delivery may well be subject to more high-level training that is more specific to their roles.

A further learning pathway is available to our staff that focuses on "Modern Slavery and Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management". This provides some background on the Modern Slavery Act and the considerations of the Act in terms of engaging with suppliers and their supply chains, whether through commissioning, or procurement, or contract management. It includes an assessment tool to review level of modern slavery risk against:

- industry type
- nature of workforce
- supplier location
- context (in which the supplier operates)
- commodity type
- business / supply chain model

In addition to updating and improving our Dorset Council website content for modern slavery, work has been undertaken to raise the profile of the work internally including making it easier for staff to access support and information via the intranet.

Approval for this Statement

This statement is presented to Dorset Council's Cabinet for approval on 8 September 2026. [if approved] [This statement was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 8 September 2026, Agenda Item [X] Additional Procurement Pipeline 2026-27 and incorporating the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025-2026.]

ADD HERE LINK OF CABINET MINUTES

DRAFT v1