

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

## Report of Chief Executive

To  
Cabinet  
On

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Report prepared by: Jodi Thompson  
Policy and Performance Officer for Inclusion and Interim  
Senior Consultation and Participation Advisor

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### Modern Slavery Statement (MSS) 2018/19

A Part 1 (public) Agenda Item

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee – Cabinet Member: Councillor Lamb

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#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with the Council's Modern Slavery Statement (**Appendix 1**) for consideration and to note further action being undertaken to support work in this area.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the Council's 2018/19 Modern Slavery Statement (MSS).

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 Commercial organisations with a turnover of more than £36m are required (under s.54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) to publish an annual 'slavery and human trafficking statement'. While local authorities *may* not be covered by this requirement, many other local authorities have produced a MSS. Producing a statement provides an opportunity to highlight the work currently being undertaken by the Council and partners in this area, and consider further potential action.
- 3.2 MSSs need to set out the steps the Council has taken during the previous financial year to ensure that modern slavery is not taking place in any part of its business or supply chain and good practice would indicate the need to set out further planned action.
- 3.3 Modern slavery is an umbrella term that covers the offences of human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. It is a highly complex and hidden crime, which makes it challenging to accurately measure its prevalence.
- 3.4 The most robust current estimate of the scale of modern slavery in the UK was produced by the Home Office in 2014. The estimate suggested that there were between 10,000 and 13,000 potential victims of modern slavery in the UK in

2013. There are three main sources of data available on the potential scale of modern slavery in the UK:

- Referrals of potential victims to **the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**, the UK's identification and support system for victims of modern slavery. In 2016, there were 3,804 potential victims referred to the NRM (a 16% increase from 2015), of which around a third (1,277) were children. In 2017, referrals to the NRM rose by 35% to 5145 potential victims. [The 2017 NRM annual report](#) also highlighted that minor exploitation referrals in the UK increased 66% to 2118 in 2017, compared to 1278 in 2016.
- Referrals of potential victims under **the 'duty to notify' provision** of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Specified public bodies have a duty to notify the Government if they encounter an adult victim of modern slavery.
- The number of **modern slavery crimes recorded by the police**. In the year to March 2017, police in England and Wales recorded 2,255 modern slavery offences, a 159% increase on the previous year.

3.5 [The 2017 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery](#) published in October 2017 provides an overview of modern slavery in the UK and explains how the UK has responded to this threat over the last 12 months. The annual report has been taken over by the Prime Minister's Modern Slavery Taskforce and agreed by Government representatives (UK, Ireland, Wales and Scotland). Recent [media reports](#) suggest the police are failing to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking due to the complexity of cases and an apparent lack of public sympathy for victims.

3.6 The Council has a statutory [Duty to Notify](#) the Home Office under the Act if it believes anyone to be a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking. Current statutory responsibilities mean that local authorities must support child victims of modern slavery under child protection arrangements and that children are not required to consent to an NRM referral. Adults can refuse, making data an incorrect reflection of actual victims.

3.7 The number of referrals in Essex significantly increased over 2016/17 from 52 to 162. Due to changes introduced to the NRM recording methodology, there is no direct comparable for previous years referrals. For comparison however, within the new recording methodology, Essex Police made a total of 73 referrals to the NRM during 2017, Essex County Council 7, Thurrock Council 8 and Southend Borough Council 1.

3.8 Charities, police and local authorities have called on the government to address a disparity in support for child victims of modern slavery and trafficking. Currently, adult victims can access specialist support through the NRM, which is funded by government, whereas child victims fall under the responsibility of local authorities.

3.9 There has been a recent [reform of the National Referral Mechanism \(or Duty to Notify form\)](#) to improve both the decision-making process and support offered. The first measures to be announced, as part of a broader package of reforms which will be announced in due course, include:

- A single, expert unit will be created in the Home Office to handle all cases referred from front line staff and to make decisions about whether somebody is a victim of modern slavery. This will replace the current case management units in the National Crime Agency and UK Visas and Immigration and will be completely separate from the immigration system.
- An independent panel of experts will be introduced to review all negative decisions, adding significantly to the scrutiny such cases currently receive.
- A new digital system to support the NRM process will be introduced, making it easier for those on the frontline to refer victims for support and enabling data to be captured and analysed to better aid prevention and law enforcement.

3.10 The UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery also outlines that a Business Against Slavery Forum was launched in October 2017, with Chief Executives of 8 multinational corporations to forge a partnership between government and business and eradicate slavery from supply chains.

3.11 The Local Government Association (LGA) recently published [‘tackling modern slavery: a council guide’](#) and hosted a series of seminars to raise awareness of the issue and provide clarity for councils on their role.

3.12 The Home Office has updated its [resources page](#), aimed at public sector organisations, to help their staff understand modern slavery and learn to spot the signs and what follow up action to take.

#### **4. Action to Tackle Modern Slavery in Southend**

4.1 A range of activity has been undertaken, or is planned to be undertaken, to tackle MS in Southend. This is detailed in the MSS (**Appendix 1**). In particular, the Council is fostering a strong, co-ordinated approach from local stakeholders, channelled through partnership boards and aligning the MSS and associated actions alongside the Community Safety Unit’s Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VUU) partnership. The triangulated inter-faith community, Council and Community Safety approach will be formalised to sit within a forthcoming Modern Slave Labour sub-safeguarding board to ensure a consistent and robust approach to MSHT in Southend.

#### **5. Other Options**

5.1 Do not publish a MSS. This would result in an unclear and uncoordinated approach to MSHT and be in contrast to other local authorities both regionally and nationally. The potential impact for prevalence of MSHT in Southend should also be noted if no MSS (and affiliated actions) is published annually.

#### **6. Reasons for Recommendations**

6.1 As noted in section 3.4, MSHT is a rapidly increasing crime across the UK, with the [International Labour Organisation](#) (ILO) suggesting there are more than 40 million people in modern slavery across the world estimating and that forced labour is generating criminal profits of approximately £150 billion a year. As such, it is important that we take a coordinated, partnership approach to MSHT, beginning with publication of the MSS and progress towards affiliated actions.

## **7. Corporate Implications**

### **7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities**

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 provides victims with greater protections, the police with increased powers and requires businesses to report on actions they are taking to address and identify modern slavery in their supply chains. The Council is duty bound, as a local authority first responder (outlined in section 3.6), to comply with the Act, including clear and concise processes relating to victim identification, referral and support. Commitment to the Act and MSS is in line with our vision and Corporate priorities in creating a better Southend, with particular focus on safety.

### **7.2 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications in approving the Modern Slavery Statement, however, further work will be undertaken by officers to identify potential costs in any further measures to tackle modern slavery but an initial view is that these will be minor and will be contained within existing budget resources.

### **7.3 Legal Implications**

As outlined in section 3.1, 3.2 and 3.6.

### **7.4 People Implications**

As outlined in section 3.

### **7.5 Property Implications**

N/A

### **7.6 Consultation**

The MSS has been reviewed and consulted upon by the cross-Council group.

### **7.7 Equality and Diversity Implications**

The MSS and affiliated action has strong affiliations with the Council's four equality objectives, in particular that the Council continues to improve outcomes for all (including vulnerable people and marginalised communities) and partnership working to support the aims and vision of the Council.

### **7.8 Risk Assessment**

N/A

### **7.9 Value for Money**

N/A

#### 7.10 Community Safety Implications

As outlined in section 3.

#### 7.11 Environmental Impact

N/A

### **8. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Modern Slavery Statement 2018/19