



South Tyneside Council

Item 7a

Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025 - 2026

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Council – 30 July 2026

Report to Council

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Susan Sybenga, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Finance and Resources

Report of Stuart Reid, Director of Business and Resources

Subject: Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025 - 2026

Date: 30 July 2026

Wards affected: All

Council ambitions: All

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? Yes

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: N/A

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: N/A

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks Council approval for the publication of a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement covering the 2025-26 financial year.
2. Council is asked to approve the proposed appended Statement which has been developed to take account of Government guidance and has incorporated contributions and feedback from the various services represented within the Council's Modern Slavery Steering Group.

Background Information

3. In line with section 54 Modern Slavery Act 2015, South Tyneside is required on an annual basis to produce and publish on its homepage a transparency statement outlining efforts undertaken in the most recent financial year to manage and minimise the risks of modern slavery within the business and supply chain.
4. In order to satisfy this requirement, the cross-service South Tyneside Modern Slavery Steering Group develops an annual statement summarising relevant recent work.
5. The appended draft statement covers the most recent financial year, 2025 to 2026.

Main issues and Options to be Considered

6. In line with Government guidance, the draft Statement includes information on the Council structure, identifies areas of the business at higher risk of exposure to modern slavery, and sets out the key policies and initiatives in place to minimise the risks of slavery. These include safeguarding policies and procedures, recruitment policies, the Procurement Strategy, the Employee and Elected Members Codes of Conduct, the 'Speak Out' Whistleblowing Policy and the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy.
7. The Statement also describes due diligence processes, outlines information on training, references the role of the Modern Slavery Steering Group in monitoring and steering performance in this area of work, and sets out key indicators of potential slavery and trafficking and provides information on what to do if readers of the Statement encounter or suspect modern-day slavery or trafficking.
8. The South Tyneside Transparency Statement also goes beyond the traditional statutory focus on risks in relation to commercial and recruitment activity, and additional communications wider efforts taken by the Council to combat the risks of slavery occurring within the local community and to ensure services

are positioned to support in the event instances of modern slavery are identified locally.

9. Similar to previous years, the draft 2025-26 Statement has been structured to align with the Council's Modern Slavery Strategy, providing an overview of key activities undertaken within the last 12 months in relation to the Strategy's five action areas: Identify, Respond, Disrupt, Prevent and Engage:
 - **IDENTIFY:** The statement details ongoing communications and training efforts supporting awareness raising about modern slavery across the workforce, including intranet guidance, employee e-learning and information leaflets distributed to non-desk-based staff and across the various employee networks (women's network, neurodiversity and disability network, carers network, multi-cultural network, age friendly network, armed forces network, confident women's community, men's network and early careers network).
 - **RESPOND:** Alongside providing details of multi-agency safeguarding training delivered to 2,229 attendees over 2025-26, the statement also notes maintenance of the Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Exploitation Response Plan, as well as alignment of the Joint Strategic Exploitation Group's Exploitation Action Plan with the Modern Slavery Strategy, alongside business-as-usual safeguarding arrangements.
 - **DISRUPT:** The statement notes ongoing collaboration with regional counterparts and Northumbria Police through the new regional Anti-Slavery Network and outlines multi-agency intelligence sharing in-house training and which helps to ensure that services with special regulatory and inspection powers are ready to support with police investigations and disruption operations.
 - **PREVENT:** The statement sets out information on procurement due diligence processes that helps to mitigate risks, describes ongoing regional work that the Council has contributed to via the North East Procurement Organisation environmental, social and governance framework that includes modern slavery prevention considerations, and outlines work undertaken by commissioning colleagues in response to heightened modern slavery risks within the care system nationally.
 - **ENGAGE:** Alongside recapping ongoing efforts to share national awareness-raising campaigns, the statement details a range of recent local engagement efforts, noting that this work has actively contributed to contacts from local partners raising concerns about possible modern slavery in the community.
10. Council is asked to review and endorse the proposed Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the 2025-26 year.
11. Once the latest version of the South Tyneside Modern Slavery Transparency Statement has been endorsed by Council, in line with s54 Modern Slavery Act

2015 requirements, it will be uploaded to the Council's website and shared with the Government's Modern Slavery Statement Registry.

Implications

Financial and Resources

12. The activity referenced within the statement has been met from existing service budgets.

Legal and Governance

13. The production and publication of the report satisfies the Council's obligations under s54 Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Risk

14. The exercise of reviewing and updating the Statement each year, at executive level, helps to ensure the Council is at low risk of supporting slavery or human trafficking.
15. The annual production of a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement is required under section 54 Modern Slavery Act 2015. There are no financial penalties currently associated with failure to comply with the requirement to produce or update a Modern Slavery Statement, but there are potential reputation implications, and Government could bring proceedings in the event of non-compliance, which could result in legal costs.

Equality and Diversity and Community

16. Slavery can and does affect victims of any gender, age, ethnicity or national origin, but there are groups and individuals who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, including people experiencing financial insecurity, people who face language or other barriers to accessing information on topics such as employment rights, or who people have been separated from normal support networks, such as recent immigrants.
17. This Transparency Statement is a retrospective summary of activities undertaken over 2025-26 to combat Modern Slavery, so no Equality Impact Assessment is necessary, however an Equality Impact Assessment has been developed to inform the 2026-28 Modern Slavery Strategy.

Environmental and Sustainability

18. There are no significant environmental and sustainability impacts associated with this report, although efforts in relation to supply chain risk assessment closely align with wider Council sustainability priorities.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

19. The Modern Slavery Transparency Statement outlines a range of activities which contribute to all of the Council's corporate ambitions. In particular, this includes contributing to the ambition of ensuring residents are 'Part of Strong Communities', and to the 'Targeting Support to Make Things Fairer' ambition.
20. The Transparency Statement references and is closely linked to the Council's Modern Slavery Strategy 2022-24, and to the proposed refreshed 2026-28 Modern Slavery Strategy.

Consultation and Engagement

21. The report has been considered and shaped by the Modern Slavery Steering Group members. Members of the group include representatives from a range of South Tyneside services, including Procurement, People and Organisational Development, Public Health, Children's Services, South Tyneside Homes and Adult Social Care and Commissioning.

Recommendations

22. It is recommended that Council endorse and approve the publication on the Council website of the draft Modern Slavery Transparency Statement attached at Appendix 1.

Reasons for Recommendations

23. Approval of an annual Transparency Statement for 2025-26, and publication of that statement on the Council's website and in the Government Modern Slavery Registry, will ensure the Council effectively discharges its statutory duty under s54 Modern Slavery Act 2015.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2026

Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025-2026

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location