

UK Modern Slavery Act Transparency in Supply Chains: Reporting by Local Authorities

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Introduction

This report analyses progress in transparency reporting by local authorities under the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) (MSA). It is the latest report in the BHRE Research Series, which has provided in depth qualitative analysis of modern slavery reporting by public bodies on their efforts to combat modern slavery and human trafficking in their supply chains since the MSA Transparency in Supply Chains Provision (TISC) (Section 54), entered into force on 29th October 2015. This research report covers the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) reporting periods for the financial years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. During this period, local authorities had to simultaneously cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and its various impacts, some of which we explore in relation to modern slavery reporting later in this report.

Our first research report on local authorities covered the reporting periods corresponding 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 financial years. The second report covered the years 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

Over the years since the implementation of the modern Slavery Act 2015, a total of 178 Councils have published a modern slavery statement which remain accessible online, out of 398 in the entirety of the UK, whether individual or jointly written.ⁱ

As it is well known by now, the TISC provision of the MSA requires commercial

entities to annually report on all actions taken to identify, prevent and mitigate modern slavery in their supply chains. The aim of the provision is to encourage commercial entities to investigate their supply chain and the effects of their activities upon others, and to communicate this knowledge internally and externally. Only commercial entities with a total annual turnover over £36 million have been required to publish their annual Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement (the Statement). In principle, local authorities do not fall within the category of entities obliged to report under the MSA. However, a significant number of local authorities in the UK has have chosen to report, exposing themselves to scrutiny, embarking in challenging learning processes to develop due diligence in their decision making when purchasing and contracting goods, services and works, and providing national and international leadership in sustainable and socially responsible practices. As this report shows, local authorities are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibilities and opportunities to influence working conditions in their supply chains, even if there are still important changes that need to be done in both the way they pursue their procurement and they report on their actions. This is especially urgent as the next review of the MSA will extend S.54 of the MSA to public bodies, including local authorities, with a budget threshold of £36 million or more in England and Wales.ⁱⁱ

About this report

This third BHRE local authorities' Research Report continues the methodology of our previous reports and focuses on the trends in quality and overall progress since the last report. As in our previous research reports, this third Report reflects on the quality of statements, analyses compliance with the formal requirements of the law and analyses the substantive content that local authorities disclose in their statements to highlight good practice and encourage improvements. This Research Report has analysed 178 statements by local authorities publicly available until September 2022. All the statements found and analysed are listed in Annex I, which also notes those statement which have not been found, even if those Councils reported in previous years.

The Report aims to underline local authorities' experiences, as communicated in their statements, focusing on best practices to encourage continued improvement in anticipation of the mandatory reporting requirements being introduced for the public sector.

In Annex II we have included an updated Aide Memoire to support local authorities in their sustained journey towards being part of the solution to modern slavery in supply chains, rather than one more element in the long chain that perpetuates the abuse of those who produce the products they purchase and provide the services they contract.

As this report highlights, local authorities have made important progress in assuming their responsibility to combat on modern slavery in their supply chains and be transparent about it. Yet, effectiveness of such efforts and examples provided continue to be slow and scarce. The impressive progress our research showed between our first and second reports, has slowed down. Whilst this stagnation in progress can be partially attributed to a number of factors: the impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the increase of competing priorities, and the ever dwindling funding and the subsequent lack of capacity; we also hope that Councils have not grown weary of the, at times, overwhelming requirements to monitor and then report on transparency activities, provided the further difficulties local authorities face with budget cuts and ever-increasing demand for services.

Despite this local authorities continue to lead the public sector to voluntarily (whilst [universities](#) also publish MS statements they do as part of their legal requirements) committing and developing tools to prevent, identify and mitigate human rights abuses in their supply chains. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on working conditions across the globe but has also provided further visibility to exploitative conditions and the risks in global supply chains. The latest [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery](#) by the International Labour Organisation estimates that fifty million people were living in modern slavery

in 2021, of which 28 million were in forced labour. This is a significant rise, ten million people more in modern slavery than the estimated in 2016. Sadly, this may only continue to rise in the economic crisis we are facing in the coming years. Therefore, it is more urgent than ever that local authorities to consider and assess their supply chains and the impacts their activities have on the wider global scale.

The years ahead will not be easy. Local authorities now have increased resources to support their responsibilities, including the new [Modern Slavery Statement Registry](#), where companies and public bodies can add their statements to be more easily accessible and the [Modern Slavery Assessment Tool](#) (MSAT), provided by the government as an identification and management tool to help public sector organisations work in partnership with suppliers, and which public sector organisations are encouraged to use. Local authorities are not currently making significant use of these tools, though. The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced important materials, including the [Councillor Guide to Tackling Modern Slavery](#) and a [Transparency in Supply Chains Statements Aide Memoire](#) (with the authors, Olga Martin-Ortega and Anna Gorna), as well as continuing to review and publish their own Statement annually.ⁱⁱⁱ We hope this Research Report will too help local authorities in their journey to enhance their practices on combatting modern

slavery in their supply chain and report appropriately on it.

Impact of Covid-19

The global Covid-19 pandemic has created an additional strain on the public authorities, whose resources were already limited and restricted. With the additional responsibilities, vastly changed priorities, and unforeseen spending, reprieve has to be provided to Councils if they have failed to engage with the reporting process during this period.

Several statements refer explicitly to this impact. For example, [Stockport Borough Council](#) statement says that ‘the Covid-19 pandemic had delayed implementation of some parts of the plan, and that work was needed to ensure that the objectives of the Modern Slavery Statement are met in 2020 and beyond.’ [Kensington and Chelsea Council](#) conceded that the number of professions who received modern slavery training was lower than in the previous year due to the pandemic and personnel changes. Whereas [Cardiff Council](#) ‘developed a Covid-19 compliant (virtual) Training Programme for 2021/2022’.

As mentioned, the pandemic has further highlighted the reality of modern slavery in supply chains. Some Councils have responded to this with increased understanding of modern slavery risks, and the impact of the pandemic upon them. [Kingston upon Thames Council](#) identified that throughout the pandemic,

victims of Modern Slavery 'may have become even more isolated, therefore awareness raising is occurring throughout the whole Council.' [Camden Council](#) also highlighted their activities to ensure fair treatment of agency workers stating that 'all non-frontline agency workers should work from home or be redeployed to an essential service' and that 'all agency workers receive pay for the hours scheduled to work if they needed to self-isolate and were required to carry out a front line role.' On their supply chains, Camden Council said they '[w]orked strategically and proactively with suppliers to identify risks across supply chains particularly with regards contractor staff welfare and access to fair wages in light of the Covid 19 pandemic'. Additional detail on the communications and agreements reached with suppliers would have elevated the statement and provided further context to their activities.

Rarer links between increased use of Universal Credit and rise in vulnerability relating to Modern Slavery have also been identified, as the [Barking & Dagenham Council](#) statement does.

However, though some Councils identified the risk posed by the pandemic within their own business and took steps to ensure the welfare of their employees during this time, none explored nor identified exacerbation of modern slavery risks caused by the pandemic in the context of their own supply chains. During the height of the pandemic, Councils would have had contracts to

procure items where modern slavery concerns were publicly identified, such as, most notably, personal protective equipment (PPE). Whilst the procurement of medical equipment and PPE was centralised early on the response to the pandemic, the statements analysed for this report failed to consider such risks when they did acquire these products or now that they can do independently again.

Mandatory (Formal)

Requirements

Section 54 MSA makes it mandatory for entities to publish their MS statement on their website with a link in a prominent place on their homepage or in a relevant and obvious dropdown menu. Statements must also be approved at the highest level of governance of the institution and signed by one of the most senior members of the organisation. On average there has been an increase in Councils whose statements are approved at the highest level of the organisation. The same compliance has not, however, been observed in relation to the mandatory requirement of having the statement in a prominent place on the homepage, as explored below. Several issues are prominent in our analysis:

1. Using templates

In previous BHRE reports we have discouraged the use of templates, and we continue to do so. The use of templates has

certain merits, for example can make comparisons between statements easier, however, adhering to a preestablished form may discourage the reflection on own processes and practices that is needed if the exercise of identifying, preventing and mitigating modern slavery risks in supply chains is going to be a substantive one.

2. Accessibility

Statements ought to be easily accessible on the webpages of the reporting organisations. As in previous years, only a few Councils maintain the statement on their homepage.^{iv}

s.54(5) MSA 2015:

“... include a link to the slavery and human trafficking statement in a *prominent place on that website’s homepage.*” [Emphasis added.]

Most statements can be found in the most diverse places on the Councils’ websites, from ‘About us’ pages, ‘Strategies and Policies’, to ‘Community Safety’ or even ‘Equality and Diversity’. Therefore, there is a lack of consistency across Councils as to where the statement may be located. It still remains easier to search for MS statements using a search engine or the search option on a Council’s website, than it is to find it by browsing the websites directly.^v Some statements are even more difficult to find, for example, those which remain only in under minutes of Council meetings. The occurrence of this has decreased since the last BHRE Research

Report and generally only applies to Statements that the Council has not fully approved yet. This is also further discussed under ‘Unfinished Statements’, below.

More worrying is the fact that some statements remain inaccessible, not just due to their placement on the website, but as in one instance, the link to the statement would bring up a request to login.

Local authorities must ensure that the statement is easily accessible not only for government officials or academics but also for the members of the public. Transparency is essential for all stakeholders involved in the combatting of modern slavery. Local authorities are accountable to their constituents, and if these cannot access such a key document, this represents a failing in their transparency responsibilities. Likewise, not making statements easily accessible contravenes the MSA and [Home Office Transparency in Supply Chains Guidance](#) (hereinafter government Guidance).

As advised previously, the best place to link a statement is on the bottom of the homepage. This is in fact directly prescribed by s.54(7)(b). Councils are also encouraged to make use of the Government’s Modern Slavery Statement Registry.

3. Unfinished Statements

We welcome the fact that there has been a decrease in statements which are still in

draft form. In fact, some of the statements which were identified in our research in the previous years as drafts, are yet to be finalised and had not been updated. Even so, unfinished statements continue to feature in our research, primarily ones that are labelled as drafts, and as pointed out above, these have only been found via meeting minutes. These also tend to be unsigned. It is quite evident that those statements are still going through the internal Council approval process, which can be complex and long, involving several committee states for approval and sign off. Statement can get stuck at in the process or be given green light and never actioned, including due to lack of resources, even when the effort to draft them has been done. It is necessary to convey the importance of completing the process and finalising and publishing statement, so all this hard work does not remain invisible.

3. Annual Review

One of the mandatory requirements of the MSA 2015, is that the MS Statements are published annually for every financial year, and thus, statements should report on actions taken during the past financial year.

Modern Slavery Act (2015)

Section 54(4): A slavery and human trafficking statement for a financial year is—

(a) a statement of the steps the organisation has taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place—

(i) in any of its supply chains, and

(ii) in any part of its own business, or

(b) *a statement that the organisation has taken no such steps.*

[Emphasis added]

Failure to review and update statements remains a concern, as some Councils continue to merely replace and re-publish the same in unchanged statements. Most of the re-published statements are also those that contain low details, lack engagement with suppliers, no data and general lack of reflection, as if making them more general would guarantee they can be reproduced year on year. This is inadequate in light of the requirements of s.54 which indicates that a statement is primarily intended to show the steps undertaken by an organisation to ensure that trafficking is not taking place in its own business and its supply chains during the specific financial year that is being reported

on. A Council, in a situation where no actions have been taken can, by virtue of s. 54(4)(b), state that it has taken no steps or no new steps in the past financial year and avoid inadvertently portraying its past or continued activities as new or innovative.

In one instance, the title and main heading in the statement specify that it is for the financial year 2019/2020 but in the body of the statement it continues to refer to the year 2017/2018 and the activities undertaken then.^{vi} This continues to be discouraged and BHRE hopes that all Councils take the time to review and update their statement annually.

Analysis of whether a Council has truly reflected on their activities and updated their annual MS statement, or whether it has been republished, is made more difficult by the lack of historical records kept publicly available (see section Historical Record below)

A more alarming finding has been that many of the Councils that have not published their statement for the current financial year, and there are still many 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, with some even from the 2018/2019 financial year, featuring in their websites.

It is understandable that Councils may have failed to review or update statements in the past two years as a result of increased pressures faced by the local authorities as a result of the Covid pandemic-19. It is hoped that, as operations return to normal, Councils will

once again engage in with the requirements of the MSA and their responsibilities towards those in their supply chain.

4. Confusion Over Financial Years

Statements are to be retrospective and are to discuss activities undertaken in the financial year on which they are reporting.

There remains some confusion among Councils over which financial years they should be reporting for. As advised previously, Councils ought to report for the financial year that has ended. As most UK local authorities operate on the basis of the financial year ending in April, the most recent reports should be for 2021/2022. Yet, some Councils have already published statements for 2022/2023.^{vii} Almost 2/3 of all Councils that have MS Statements, have not published them for the correct financial year (either having incorrectly produced a statement for 2022/2023, or having failed to update an older statement, as discussed above).

Statements should not cover more than one financial year at the time, as they are not intended as a 'strategy' or intentions statement but a 'reflection' on undertaken activities.

5. Historical Record

It remains quite rare for local authorities to keep an accessible record of their MS statements published over the years. Most reporting entities tend to replace old

statements when they publish the new one. Only few Councils maintain all their previous statements, such as [Nottingham City Council](#).

BHRE maintains its advice that local authorities maintain a historical record of their past statements on their website to facilitate comparisons and reflections on the progress they have made.

Councils can also utilise the Government's Modern Slavery Statement Registry. Only a few of the statements identified during this analysis feature on the registry as well as the websites of the local authorities. Utilising the Registry, in addition to featuring the statement on their own website, will improve access and will ease the burden on the Council to maintain the record of statements on their own websites.

6. Signatures

Statements analysed in this report have significantly improved in ensuring that they were signed and approved by appropriate persons. Over half of all the analysed statements displayed signatures, including by the Chief Executive and/or Leader of the Council, or Portfolio Holder (of various departments such as Communities, Human Resources or Equalities).

Signatures should always be present and should not be redacted – even if the attempt is to maintain the security or privacy of those persons, those signing the statements are public officials and by

signing that responsibility over the veracity and accuracy of the statement.

Among the statements that do not include a physical signature, are some that provide the names of the persons who approved them, therefore to some extent establishing responsibility over their content. Other statements continued to indicate that approval has been granted by the Cabinet or Committee, but failing to include a personal signature. Some statement clearly intended for a signature to be included but it was ultimately omitted, as evident from a dotted but unfilled signature line.

Given the likely robust approval process the publication of a MS statement goes through a physical signature provides further assurance. It is unfortunate when this is not the case, especially where a statement is overall highly detailed and fulfils other requirements and expectations.

BHRE maintains our earlier suggestion that ideally the statement would be co-signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, or equivalent position, such as the Chief Operating Officer. A Director or a senior enough Portfolio Holder, for example a cabinet member councillor, could also be considered a relevant person, especially in smaller district councils. The purpose of the signatures on the MS statement is to show that the approval process is at the highest level of governance of the institution and reflects an overall commitment from those in

positions of authority. This is related to the next issue analysed.

7. Responsibility for Drafting and Owning the Statement

BHRE continues to emphasise that a MS statement should be written collaboratively by representatives from different departments. When this happens, Councils show understanding that their efforts can only be effective through a collaboration, including human resources, legal, safeguarding and most importantly procurement staff, and involvement of the institution as a whole.

The analysis carried out for this report has shown little evidence that the statement writing process is being undertaken with a Council wide input from various departments.

In our previous report, we noted the [City of London Council](#)'s^{viii} commitment to invite representatives from other relevant departments, such as Human Resources and Licensing, into their interdepartmental Working Group which already included City of London Police, the Barbican, City Procurement, Department for Community and Children's Services, Community Safety and Corporate Strategy and Performance Team. The update of this Council's statement, does not elaborate on how this working group has worked, and further detail will be welcome in their future statements. The [London Borough of Enfield Council](#) states it has a cross-

departmental Modern Slavery Board which works to monitor and take action to prevent modern slavery in all areas of Council business.

Ultimately, no other good practices have been identified regarding internal collaboration and participation in drafting processes, based on the contents of the statements analysed.

Section 54(5): An organisation's slavery and human trafficking statement may include information about—

- (a) the organisation's structure, its business and its supply chains;
- (b) its policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking;
- (c) its due diligence processes in relation to slavery and human trafficking in its business and supply chains;
- (d) the parts of its business and supply chains where there is a risk of slavery and human trafficking taking place, and the steps it has taken to assess and manage that risk;
- (e) its effectiveness in ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in its business or supply chains, measured against such performance indicators as it considers appropriate;
- (f) the training about slavery and human trafficking available to its staff.

Substantive Content

Section 54(5) provides a non-exhaustive list of information that may be included in statements, which is, for now, non-mandatory.

1. The organisation's structure, its business and its supply chain

The majority of Councils focus on the services that they provide rather than providing an accurate summary of their structure, business and supply chains. Councils continue to describe their jurisdiction, population and budget, most failing short of references to their supply chain.

Encouragingly, some Councils are beginning to provide more thorough information in this section. For instance, [Leeds City Council](#), indicated that it has 8,164 external suppliers and has “spent over £10m+ on 16 suppliers.” In other cases, we see Council's providing more context to the information – such as [London Borough of Waltham Forest](#), which states that it “has approximately 4000 suppliers, 79% of which are small to medium enterprises” or [Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council](#) which states that “63% of [their] influenceable spend is with North East organisations, so the actions that [they] take to prevent slavery and human trafficking in [their] own activity and [...] supply chains can have significant local impact.”

[Lichfield District Council](#) provides a link to the Council constitution and leadership structure, which is a positive step but forces the reader to depart from the statement and, thus, is not ideal. Such information should be incorporated into the body of the statement if it is relevant to understand

risks in their supply chain. [Nottingham City Council](#) enclosed the breakdown of their structure and services in the Appendix, which, along with directly including the information under a relevant heading within the statement, is a positive approach.

[West Lindsey District Council](#) approach to reporting on the organisation structure is also an example of good practice: it provides a description of relevant responsibilities of those in control of the MS statement, in relation to its production and the implementation of anti-slavery actions.

Councils are encouraged to include some analysis or breakdown of their spend categories, for example as was done [East Riding of Yorkshire Council](#) did in their 2017-2022 statement, which the BHRE has highlighted in our previous report.

None of the statements analysed provided an organisation chart or diagram to visualise the structure of the business, the hierarchy of those in positions of responsibility or their procurement foundations. Utilising graphs and diagrams is common in MS statements of other sectors, and provides for a good method of communicating complex and lengthy information.

Too few Councils have developed in this aspect of reporting, with many displaying the same, unamended information as in the years prior. Those that are publishing their consecutive statements, have the opportunity to reflect on the lack of detail

that they provided before and can build up on the foundations of their earlier statements. Those Councils that are publishing their statements for the first time, have ample resources to draw on in order to produce a detailed and compliant section on their business and structure. The government Guidance on Transparency in Supply Chains suggests focusing on “sector(s) the business operates in” or “relationships with suppliers and others, including trade unions and other bodies representing workers”. Most importantly, Councils should address in their statements “the make-up and complexity of the supply chains” and “the countries it sources its goods or services from including high risk countries where modern forms of slavery are prevalent”^{ix}.

Many Councils continue to declare that their supply chains are local, or UK based, either implying or directly stating this results in low, or even no, risk of modern slavery. Acknowledging that modern slavery is present in the UK and high-risk areas, especially in the sphere of services, is a continuing concern. Thus, Councils are not absolved of their responsibilities to assess and monitor modern slavery risks and ensuring that they have appropriate measures in place to prevent, mitigate and remedy any incidents.

Understanding of supply chains, origin countries and high-risk areas, including those in the UK, is essential to assessing modern slavery risks and determining what

actions need to be undertaken to limit them. In the case of local authorities this allows for understanding of the level of risks within each of the sectors from which they procure products or provide the services contracted. Good knowledge of supply chains and the structure of commercial relations in terms of suppliers, contractors and subcontractors remains a fundamental part of effective reporting.

2. Organisational Policies

The one section that Councils most often report on, and generally do so thoroughly, are organisational policies. As BHRE noted in the previous Research Report, this section of the statement is one which requires less frequent updating during annual reviews, only needing to be amended if policies have been updated or new ones implemented.

References to policies on Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Fraud and Bribery, Recruitment, Agency Worker Usage and various Code of Conducts were found across the board during the analysis. The breadth of details provided by the Council's, especially on the relationship between the various policies and modern slavery, remains varied, however. Some Councils simply list the policies, but the majority are moving away from that, providing at least some detail on what the policies cover. Only a few Councils give additional context to the policies by linking back to modern slavery.

In the statement published by [Hertsmere Borough Council](#), we can see relevant references and links being made to human trafficking and modern slavery. For example, regarding its Whistleblowing policy, the statement states:

We encourage all customers and staff to report any concerns related to the direct activities of the organisation, or those in our supply chain. This includes any circumstances that may increase the risk of slavery or human trafficking. Reporting can be anonymous.

Its references to the Recruitment Policy are also linked to risks of modern slavery:

If, through the recruitment process, it is suspected someone is being exploited, the Council will provide the employee with appropriate support. We recognise that there are increased Modern Slavery risks associated with using any third-party labour recruiter. Agencies are engaged via our procurement process and we have due diligence in place to ensure that their processes are reviewed as they are taking necessary steps to prevent exploitation.

Because the analysis shows this is a section that Councils have successfully engaged with, it is only appropriate that they are encouraged to further improve on their reporting. For instance, reporting on good recruitment policies, such as the one

reproduced above, can be followed up by describing the due diligence measures in place to monitor the processes of the recruiter, which would also contribute to the due diligence reporting requirement.

Government Guidance makes clear that organisations need not have a standalone policy in place - but may develop one or explain how current policies and practices are relevant to the cause. For the majority of the Councils, the simplest form of improvement on reporting on organisational policies would come through providing the link currently missing between the policies and how they fit into anti-slavery measures. As specific Modern Slavery Policies remain rare, elaborating on how current policies interact with efforts to combat modern slavery is necessary.

Several Councils have reported, as in previous years, on their membership and commitment to the Cooperative Party's Charter Against Modern Slavery. The list of Councils engaged in this third-party initiative continue to be recorded on the [Cooperative Party's website](#).

3. Due diligence, risk assessment and response, including effectiveness

Due diligence processes seek to identify and respond to modern slavery risks in supply chains. They involve the assessment of actual and potential risks, as well as designing and monitoring of actions undertaken to address them by preventing, mitigating and remedying

instances of modern slavery. This can only be done through engagement with the relevant actors, including and very centrally, with suppliers, to address both the risks and identified instances of modern slavery.

This section analyses how local authorities have reported on their efforts to exercise due diligence to mitigate and prevent instances of modern slavery and human trafficking by addressing the following elements: a) Assessing and prioritising risks; b) engaging with bidders and suppliers in risk assessment and response; c) collaboration; d) measuring effectiveness.

a) Assessing and prioritising risks

Very little detail continues to be provided by local authorities on the steps taken to assess modern slavery risks, and thus, as in the previous years, there is a lack of reporting on how Councils are prioritising any action on the most severe and urgent risks.

Identifying potential risks within the supply chain and prioritising actions against those risks is the first step in the due diligence process. Risk assessment allows Councils to better understand the impact of their engagement with their supply chains and provide them with the focus of where to look out for modern slavery issues. Thus, allowing them to identify where due diligence measures need to be implemented, how they should be

strengthened, and ultimately resulting in specific prioritised actions.

Dedicating time to learning of high-risk areas within and outside of the UK, will place Councils in a better position for developing effective due diligence. Risks can be considered according to country risks, sector risks, transaction risks and business partnership risks.

Statements should expand on risk assessments actually carried out and provide both an indication of the risks identified as well as the steps taken in order to make this identification. Whilst assurances such as the one contained in the [Sandwell Borough Council](#) that a 'risk assessment using its professional, legal, risk and procurement teams to determine the risk exposure' are welcome, it is important to provide the results from such assessment. In this case, a further description of how the teams collaborated during the risk assessment analysis, would strengthen the statement.

A few councils have approached this risk assessment in an effective manner and carried out at least a basic identification of high-risk areas. Good examples can be found in the statements by [Caerphilly County Borough Council](#), [Cardiff Council](#), [Flintshire County Council](#) and [London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#). For example, [Caerphilly County Borough Council](#), which states

“The high-risk sectors for Modern Slavery include agriculture, leisure, hospitality, catering, cleaning, clothing, construction and manufacturing.”

[Lichfield District Council](#) also provides an example of a helpful initial assessment from a different perspective, identifying and emphasising high risk relationships and working environments such as:

- *Complex employment relationships: a reliance on agency, outsourced or subcontracted workers.*
- *Reliance on low skilled or unskilled labour.*

- *High numbers of temporary, seasonal or agency workers.*
- *Dangerous or physically demanding work.*

As it has been highlighted in previous Research Reports, Councils are not engaging in risk assessment when they state that their activities and/or supply chains are low risk.^x Again, merely stating that the Council operates within the UK or has only local or UK based suppliers, is not a satisfactory assessment of risks. UK operations are not risk free and understanding how to spot these invisible abuses is part of the due diligence measures that need to be taken.

[North Northamptonshire Council](#) statement recognises this when it points at two high-risk sectors within the UK: exploitation of workers in car washes and care occupations. This focuses on the Councils’ duty as first responders and the need for them to remain aware how modern slavery presents in their local communities. This provides important context and illustrates that modern slavery

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Spend categories that present risks of human rights abuses

The principal categories that the Council deems as carrying material risks of human rights abuses are uniforms, other garments, services such as social care, cleaning and security services and construction. The Council believes the corresponding source countries to be as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Country</i>
Uniforms and other garments	India, Bangladesh, China, Thailand
Social care services	United Kingdom
Cleaning services	United Kingdom
Security services	United Kingdom
Construction	United Kingdom

is taking place in the UK and could arise in any supply chain.

North Northamptonshire Council

“The Council will continue to work to ensure that all vulnerable people are safeguarded and recognises the high-risk groups in its community including workers with certain occupations such as car washes / care workers and those resident in multiple occupancy properties.”

Some councils also identify that some contracts may carry a higher risk. In such cases, the statement by the [Isle of Wight Council](#) emphasises that “additional evaluation and contract monitoring criteria can be built into the procurement process”. Several Councils report on their future plans to undertake risk assessments (e.g. [Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea](#) states that it ‘will review and map its supply chains and conduct a phased risk assessment of primary and secondary suppliers and contractors in high-risk areas’). BHRE looks forward to more Councils engaging in the risk assessment exercise.

It is not realistic to expect local authorities to map all supply chains and identify all risks at once. Councils should focus on the risks which they can address as a matter of priority and more effectively by engaging with suppliers, collaborating with other

councils or external organisations to maximise their resources and capabilities.

However, local authorities also need further support in accessing and assessing risks. Centralised provision of up-to-date information on high risk goods and services, countries of origins or practices which require heightened attention should be provided so Councils can maximise their efforts in prioritising them developing their due diligence procedures to address risks which may be well known for experts but which are time consuming and complex to identify for those at the forefront of drafting the MS statement.

b) Engaging with bidders and suppliers in risk assessment and response

This section focuses on ways in which local authorities are developing diligence measures through which they engage their suppliers. Engaging in communications with bidders and suppliers about anti-slavery measures is a prerequisite to effective due diligence as it allows local authorities to engage directly with their supply chain. Conversation with suppliers can be key in understanding and identifying risks that are present in that supply chain and enquire about the measures being undertaken by bidders and suppliers themselves. Monitoring due diligence measures may not be enough if there is no engagement.

References to engagement with suppliers remain general and vague, with many

Councils limiting their reporting on due diligence to stating that it includes mapping of the supply chain, evaluating modern slavery and human trafficking risks of each new supplier, or signposting suppliers to information or practical advice and guidance on how to sign up and implement the code. However, in our analysis we have seen an increase in the measures and approaches used by Councils to engage with their actual and potential suppliers. There has been an evident step in the right direction.

During tender processes several Councils report engaging with potential suppliers by raising concerns during market dialogues or inserting specific questions in pre-qualification questionnaires and award criteria. [Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council](#), for instance, states that they “apply proportionate quality criteria in every tender evaluation to mitigate risks posed by competition on price only and allow tenderers to demonstrate how they ensure the welfare of employees.” Other references to tender questionnaires are made by [Ceredigion County Council](#) which states that it will include question sets on ethical employment in all tenders and more specifically on modern slavery, [Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#) seeks assurances from potential suppliers that they have suitable and robust processes in place to mitigate risks associated with modern slavery within their organisation. The Council further expands that it expects suppliers to take

responsibility for seeking similar assurances from their own supply chains. [Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council](#) reports including questions on modern slavery in tenders as part of a mandatory requirement of the selection process, and all suppliers are required to confirm their compliance with the legislation.

[Cardiff Council](#) also states that with “all invitations to tender for business with Cardiff Council over £1 million, there is an expectation that the supplier should be a signatory of the Welsh Government’s Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and the question is posed directly in Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs). This is also encouraged in all other tenders.” Several Councils report using the Standard Selection Questionnaire (SSQ) provided by the Crown Commercial Service, or their own versions of tender questionnaires which address modern slavery. As highlighted in previous Research Reports, whilst using questionnaires to gather information on supplier’s compliance with their MSA 2015 obligations is a good practice, this remains a self-certification device with limitations such as increased risk of exaggeration or lack of detail that can be collected using the SSQ.

Further, Councils are emphasising challenging abnormally low tender quotes. [Cardiff Council](#) reports on conducting “supplier assessments to create a risk

profile focusing on financial stability and also covering insurance and compliance with various employment policies including the Welsh Government's Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains." This ensures that employment matters are considered during the procurement process and that the Council does not contribute to unethical employment by inadvertently encouraging underpaying of subcontractors and employees. Continuing with its good practice, [Cardiff Council](#) states that its due diligence measures include "as part of tender evaluation and ongoing contract management, consideration of the potential and likelihood of modern slavery; seeking mitigations from the supplier through a clear understanding of the suppliers' structure, business and supply chains and policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking."

During contract management, continues engagement with suppliers on their actions to prevent and address modern slavery is key. [Leeds City Council](#) reports that guidance is provided to Contract Managers to use questionnaire responses from suppliers to then "identify areas for improvement and to work with suppliers to improve their capacity to prevent and respond to modern slavery".

[City of London's](#) Statement Update of 2021 states that 'Markets & Consumer Protection (MCP) officers frequently visit sites in the Square Mile posing risks of modern slavery and are vigilant in

observing and reporting any suspicious circumstances.'

In many instances, the details of the measures remain scarce and the statements would be greatly improved through providing further context. For instance, [Belfast City Council](#) has introduced a Category Management structure within the team, which, it states, 'enables greater transparency in the identification of risks associated with modern slavery on a category basis'. Further detail is required to understand the role of the Category Management structure regarding modern slavery, how it is implemented, how suppliers are engaged, and what is the specific impact this due diligence measures.

[Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames](#) reports that it uses an assessment tool designed in collaboration with their internal and external stakeholders and which they have shared with over 500 of their suppliers.

Few Councils already report using the MSAT tool developed by the government, but some express their intention to do so in the future. An example is [Plymouth City Council](#), which notes that it will develop a process to utilise it.

Councils also continue to request that suppliers self-certify that no modern slavery is taking place in their supply chains, outside of the tender process. BHRE maintains that this is a low effort due diligence measure, and as emphasised in

or first Research Report, it is likely to be ineffective due to the lack of proper checks and monitoring. Moreover, if questions to suppliers are limited to whether they comply with their MSA s.54 obligations, smaller businesses will not be questioned on their efforts to combat modern slavery as they do not meet the £36 million reporting threshold.

Continuing from the previous Research Report which highlighted use of contract clauses to establish legal responsibilities for suppliers and rights for Councils regarding engaging to identify, prevent and mitigate modern slavery, this remains a measure that Councils engage in. [Crawley Borough Council](#), for instance, states that it will include clauses in their standard contract terms that specify the supplier's contractual obligation concerning modern slavery. [Essex County Council](#) also reports continuing to engage this due diligence measure.

Councils need to avoid passing on the responsibility for due diligence measures onto their suppliers, however. Thinly veiled engagement strategies where the Council merely requires their suppliers to sign up to specific codes of conduct or forwarding their policies to the suppliers is not an adequate method of engagement and does not open the communication channels required to engage on modern slavery and does not encourage a collaborative approach.

Welsh Councils, for example, require their suppliers to sign up to the Welsh Governments Code of Practice for Ethical Employment in Supply Chains (e.g. [Powys County Council](#)). This is good practice if it is accompanied by other due diligence measures.

Requesting the policies and details of the working practices of the suppliers could be a good process of engagement, as long as further analysis and engagement follows on from that. [Eastleigh Borough Council](#) reports on these requests in its MS statement, which would be strengthened in the future by reporting on the analysis and action from such engagement which followed. In fact, this principle applies to all due diligence measures. For instance, [North Hertfordshire District Council](#) reports that they "will utilise the Government Modern Slavery Statement Registry [which will allow] the Council to easily assess information in relation to suppliers' compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015." The statement would be strengthened in the future by reporting on the further engagement with the suppliers was regarding their modern slavery statement.

[Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council](#) commits in its statement to collaborate with the supplier or recommend an appropriate agency who can assist if the supplier's policies are lacking. It further states that '[s]hould the council have serious concerns around a supplier's policies and the safety of those working for them, this should be

immediately referred to the council's Procurement team as well as the contract manager and a suitable escalation process followed.'

Few Councils directly address what to do suppliers fail to engage or their practices do not comply with the local authority's policies and contractual demands regarding modern slavery. Among the more cited consequences for lack of compliance by suppliers is contract termination. [Cardiff Council](#) is again a good example of practice. Its statement notes that its due diligence measures include 'taking steps to improve sub-standard supplier practices, including the provision of advice to suppliers and requiring them to implement Action Plans; for example to demonstrate compliance with safer recruitment guidelines' but also '[i]nvolving sanctions in respect of suppliers who fail to meet our expectations or to improve their performance in line with an Action Plan, which includes a provision to terminate the business relationship.'

[Herefordshire Council](#) is another local authority which allows itself to terminate a contract and provides that all new council contracts and framework agreements include clauses which require suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in their own business and to allow for the termination of the contract if breached.

The [Isle of Wight Council's](#) statement is worthy of been highlighted in this regard.

'We will be proportionate in our approach. We will not impose any unnecessary burdens that would deter suppliers from competing for our contracts. On this basis, we have not adopted a blanket approach to managing modern slavery risks. The approach will be proportionate based on the type of contract being procured and the risks identified.'

Due diligence is not only preventive but it should also foresee the response to violations when they are found. At the centre of these actions should be the consideration of the needs of victims and to what extent local authorities can support processes which aim to remediate the harm suffered.

c) Collaboration

Modern slavery and human rights abuse in supply chains cannot be addressed by a single organisation. It is a global challenge, requiring both global and local action and the involvement of many entities. Furthermore, partnerships promote knowledge and the sharing of best practice, as well as allowing for a more efficient resource management. Local authorities have demonstrated over the years they have reported under the MSA that they are at the forefront of these collaborative efforts. Most partnerships to address

modern slavery risks still focus on direct employees and residents of the Council. Expanding this practice to risks in the supply chain would be the next step in enhancing Council's response to the risks faced by those impacted by their commercial activities.

Collaboration with public bodies, unions and civil society

Collaborations between councils and public bodies are by far the most common form of collaboration reported in MS statements. There is an evident focus on community safety, with collaboration and communication with the police and safeguarding, cooperation with local communities and other stakeholders. This is directly related to local authorities' reporting duties under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and duties to community safeguarding.

Collaborative work with civil society organisations and consultants is also mentioned, but usually for the purpose of delivering or developing training. Reaching out to bodies such as the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Home Office, Trading Standards and the Police is important and expected. However, too many Councils generally refer to 'partnerships' with such bodies without specific details or include reference to specific projects or agreements in place.

[Test Valley Borough Council](#) provides an example of more detailed account. It works

in partnership with Test Valley (Community Safety) Partnership; Hampshire Constabulary; and Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight Modern Slavery Partnership. Its work with Hampshire Constabulary is aimed at identifying and manging victims, and perpetrators, of modern slavery. The Council explains that its work with the Test Valley Partnership operates under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and is underpinned by the duty to prevent crime and disorder, which includes modern slavery and trafficking.

[Tamworth Borough Council](#) works with Staffordshire Commissioners Office for Police, Fire and Crime and Staffordshire Police through the Tamworth Community Safety Partnership, and further makes a commitment to ensure that relevant staff continue to attend Staffordshire Police Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Tactical group to share relevant information.

[Suffolk County Council](#) reports being part of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) which has modern slavery as one of its key priorities. The Council's statement also describes the newly formed Modern Slavery Network which aims to share best practice, share data and information, develop training and awareness raising campaigns. The statement states that a new strategy was due to be launched in January 2022 and an action plan intended to focus on identifying victims, supporting

victims, preventing exploitation and protection & justice. BHRE looks forward to the updates on the impact and successes of those strategies in next year's statement.

Furthermore, [Suffolk County Council](#) explores the Multi Agency Criminal Exploitation (MACE) panels, introduced in June 2021, with the objectives of protecting young people from harm due to exploitation and to disrupt perpetrators and the related Criminal Exploitation Hubs, launched in May 2021, which work to disrupt and empower children and communities from the risk of exploitation. The partnership work undertaken by Suffolk is clearly extensive and BHRE encourages it to further describe its involvement in the partnerships and its effectiveness in preventing and responding to risks of modern slavery in its supply chain.

[Southampton City Council](#) recognises its need to work with external partners to respond and report incidents, which includes working with the Port, UK Border Force, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Police, Civil Contingencies, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Port Health, Community Safety, Licensing, Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care. Beyond that, the Council is involved in a Modern Slavery Working Group as well as working to protect children and vulnerable adults who are through the Southampton Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Southampton Safeguarding Adult's Board.

[Sevenoaks District Council](#) facilitates a multi-agency Sevenoaks Community MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which aims to develop a common understanding and accountability framework among local partners of the threats, vulnerabilities and risks relating to and including, among others, slavery and human trafficking; provide and share information and intelligence on which to base local programmes and action plans that feed into the Community Safety Strategy; and understand and agree on a targeted and proportionate use of resources.

Our analysis shows that there is significant collaboration going on at regional level. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Modern Slavery Partnership being the most cited partnership across the statements.

Collaboration among local authorities

Collaboration among local authorities themselves are equally important. They will help in terms of maximising resources and promote regional coordination but should not be used to discharge due diligence and MS reporting responsibilities.

[Kensington and Chelsea Council](#)

reports that it worked in partnership with Westminster City Council to publish a modern slavery strategy. [Tamworth Borough Council](#), further to the collaborations with external agencies described, also claims that it supports Staffordshire County Council. The

statement, however, omits how and in what context this support is provided, and makes no links to modern slavery measures.

With the recent changes to the organisation of local authorities, with regional mergers over the past few years, there appears to be a decrease in Council collaboration – at least from the perspective of addressing modern slavery. Some of the Councils that may have previously drafted joint statements no longer exist as independent entities. Currently the following Councils published their MSA statements together:

- Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon Council
- West Devon District Council and South Hams District Council
- Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council

d) [Measuring effectiveness](#)

Reporting on the effect of measures taken to address modern slavery risks is generally lacking from statements and has been so since public bodies started reporting under the MSA, as we have noted in our previous Research Reports on local authorities and universities. However, it is encouraging to see that Councils are beginning to better understand effectiveness reporting, and increasingly statements reflect this. Government Guidance encourages organisations to report on the effectiveness of their

measures by providing information on existing or additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to anti-slavery actions. KPIs should allow for the tracking of progress in short, medium and long term and allow for substantive measurement of effectiveness of processes and practices.

KPIs are tools to measure effectiveness of due diligence, but not due diligence measures in themselves and should not therefore substitute having appropriate strategies to prevent and respond to modern slavery. In order for KPI's to be a good tool to measure effectiveness of the steps taken by a Council to ensure that modern slavery and/or human trafficking is not taking place within their business or supply chains, they need to be rigorously measured and reported upon.

[Cumbria County Council](#) states that their Corporate Performance Management system holds information on the actions, measures (performance indicators) and risks that are linked to the work they do. We encourage the Council to reflect the specific details in the statement in order to understand how effective certain measures are in preventing and addressing modern slavery.

It is evident from our analysis though that some local authorities remain confused as to how they should set and structure their KPIs. Listing actions for next year is not really adequate for the purposes of the effectiveness sections. Equally,

requirements and next steps are not a measurement of effectiveness.

As with collaboration many Councils focus on reporting on KPIs related to their safeguarding duties, and do not include mentions to KPIs beyond local risks of modern slavery and in relation to abuses in their supply chains.

Some examples of more focused and measurable KPIs include [Dartford Borough Council](#)'s:

- Number of suppliers evaluated using its supplier evaluation and due diligence measures.
- Number of employees trained on safeguarding and modern slavery; and
- Number of cases reported under the Whistleblowing Policy and resulting action.

Based on the above KPIs, Dartford Borough Council reported that (in the 2019/2020 year) 72 suppliers were evaluated, 206 employees were up to date with their training on safeguarding and 0 cases were reported under the Whistleblowing Policy. This is good practice, and we encourage the Council to continue to measure this progress quantitative whilst adding further modern slavery specific indicators.

Also notable is [East Hampshire District Council](#) (relatively similar KPIs are reported by [Elmbridge Borough Council](#) and [Havant Borough Council](#)):

- All new suppliers confirming their adherence to the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Employees made aware of Modern Slavery Act 2015 and updated training provided to 75% of workforce.
- Completion of mandatory Safeguarding Training, by all employees within last 3 years.
- Number of cases reported and resulting action

Lastly, [Kingston upon Thames Council](#) also uses a good set of KPIs, which should successfully capture some of the effectiveness of the measures undertaken by the Council. Those are:

- All suppliers confirming their adherence to the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Annual monitoring of modern slavery risks with our suppliers which informs gap analysis and reflective action log and programme.
- % of Contract Management scorecards receiving 'meeting expectations' under ethical sourcing assessment criteria.
- All Corporate procurement and Contracts teams complete CIPS ethical procurement training.
- Rate of completion of modern slavery e-training module.

- The percentage of suppliers reporting that all their staff have completed modern slavery training.
- The number of cases reported, how it results in action and the lessons learned moving forward.

As can be seen in the examples, reporting on many staff members complete modern slavery training, is a common KPI.

4. Training on modern slavery and human trafficking

The years following the entry into force of s. 54 MSA we witness active efforts to engage on trainings and awareness raising. As modern slavery prevention becomes more embedded into organisations policy and practice, training should become more specialised. Modern Slavery training can take on various forms from in-house to external; induction (e.g. [Ashfield District Council](#)) or annual; as part of specialised training, such as safeguarding (e.g. [Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council](#) and [Cardiff Council](#), which cites a 'Corporate Safeguarding Children & Adults Awareness Raising Online Training Module'); mandatory or voluntary. Councils further have to decide whether refreshers will be carried out (e.g. [New Forest District Council](#) staff are required to complete an e-learning package on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which encompasses modern slavery as part of their induction, and which is due to be refreshed every three years), and whether the training will

be provided to Council staff only or also to Councillors (e.g. [Test Valley Borough Council](#) is one of the councils that have elected to provide training to Councillors as well as council staff).

Some Council's refer to external training such as the Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply (CIPS) Ethical Employment training, undertaken by their, primarily, procurement staff (e.g. [Belfast City Council](#)).

By and large the training referred to are limited to awareness raising exercises, rather than an in-depth opportunity for exploring modern slavery in procurement and supply chains. Training provided by [Barnsley Borough Council](#) aims for 'employees to be able to explain what human trafficking is and the difference types that exist; recognise the signs/indicators of different types; and know how to respond appropriately to a victim and a case of human trafficking'.

To supplement the training the Councils further report that they offer materials and publishes leaflets for staff, suppliers, and/or wider public (e.g. [Ashfield District Council](#); [Charnwood Borough Council](#) reports making available to all staff an awareness- raising document produced by the Home Office; [Durham Council](#) utilise e-briefings through which they provide information on a range of related topics, on 'any National and/or annual Modern Slavery reports and related guidance').

Other council utilise e-learning modules or programmes to promote modern slavery training. [Broxtowe Borough Council](#)'s 'e-learning system contains a mandatory module "Modern Slavery" as well as Serious Organised Crime. The purpose of the training has been to enable employees to better identify and know how to report, suspected or disclosed incidents, including situations involving slavery and trafficking.' [Powys County Council](#) has promoted an Anti-Slavery Partnership Toolkit on the staff intranet site. BHRE reminds local authorities that disseminating resources is not equivalent to training. Simply raising the matter with their employees is also not sufficient.

Some Councils place emphasis on additional training for staff that are employed in front facing services, and who are more likely to encounter victims of modern slavery. For example, [Ashfield District Council](#) which suggests such additional training will be given to Housing and Community Safety teams. However, most statements do not include details of what the training entails. Some hint at the subjects covered or the aims of the training themselves. For instance, [Blaby District Council](#) recognises that certain employees 'within the organisation may require more specific or in-depth training, depending on their job role, in order to raise awareness further and ensure compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.' The Council further states that this will *include* awareness of:

- The basic principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- How employers can identify and prevent slavery and human trafficking
- What employees can do to flag up potential slavery or human trafficking issues to the relevant parties within the organisation, and
- What external help is available, for example through the Modern Slavery Helpline.

These contents can be supplemented, and therefore improve in depth-training to cover modern slavery issued in supply chains, contract management in light of modern slavery risks and measured to lower and monitor said risks. In this line, [Bristol City Council](#) commits in its statement to 'provide targeted modern slavery supply chain and contract management training for relevant staff, including procurement teams, contract managers, trading standards, compliance, legal and finance teams.'

[Chelmsford City Council](#) has produced a detailed list of the types of trainings that have been carried out during the reporting period which gives a better insight into the focus that the Council has, as well as highlights the organisations they collaborate with on the provision of the trainings.

[Hampshire County Council](#) has a specialised training for staff undertaking recruitment which includes information on

how to recruit safely and mitigate the risk of modern slavery occurring in the supply of labour’.

[London Borough of Croydon](#) sent 7 trainers to the ADASS “train the trainer” sessions. Whilst [London Borough of Lambeth](#) engaged in a “train the trainer” workshop hosted by the civil society organisation FLEX (Focus on Labour Exploitation).

[North Warwickshire Borough Council](#) has developed training, further to their e-learning package to raise awareness, for staff from the Contract Management and Quality Assurance Team to ‘equip staff with the knowledge and skills to recognise what Modern Slavery looks like in the supply chain and raise awareness and respond to Modern Slavery concerns.’

The Welsh Government has also created an e-Learning Ethical Employment in Supply Chains training. Councils that have declared staff undergo this training include [Caerphilly County Borough Council](#); [Carmarthenshire County Council](#); and [Gwynedd Council](#).

Reporting on training is an ‘easy win’ for Councils. We encourage local authorities to use this section of the statement to elaborate further on the nature, periodicity and contents of the trainings as well as reflect on what it means for staff and the Council as a whole to have this wealth of knowledge and how it impacts its overall response to the modern slavery risks its commercial activities exposes it to.

Conclusions

Local authorities are leading the way in their disclosure of efforts to address modern slavery in their supply chain, both in the UK and beyond. However, they cannot do this alone. In this report we have analysed the good practices which are identifiable through their most recent MS statements, and highlighted some of the shortcoming which still remain when undertaking this complex process. Lack of capacity, resources, financing, clear guidance and support are undermining the important efforts of Councils to own their role and responsibilities in the prevention and combatting of human rights abuses in the production and provision of the goods and services they procure with public funding. It is urgent that this is addressed and due diligence becomes a reality in public supply chains.

About the Authors

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Professor Martin-Ortega is a member of the Board of Trustees of Electronics Watch and the Corporate Justice Coalition UK, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium. She also coordinates the International Learning Lab on Procurement and Human Rights. She has conducted numerous trainings for public authorities on their legal obligations under the UK Modern Slavery Act and performing human rights due diligence on their supply chain in the framework of the Higher Education Procurement Academy (HEPA) and advised the UK Home Office, the government of Canada, OSCE and United Nations on public procurement and human rights in global supply chains.

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For more information, visit www.bhre.org

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Many thanks to the LGA for maintaining a list of Councils with MS statement.

BHRE Resources for Public Buyers

TEDx Talk

[Changing the World one Tender at a Time](#) by Professor Olga Martin-Ortega (2022).

See as well, REF 2021 results feature at [LUPC Linked Magazine](#) (summer 2022).

Guidance

- Olga Martin-Ortega, Martina Trusgnach and Marisol Bernal (2021), [Preparing a Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement: Guidance for Higher Education and the wider Public Sector](#). BHRE Research Series. Policy Paper no. 6.
- Olga Martin-Ortega and Andy Davies (2019), [Modern Slavery Statement Checker. Points to check for when reviewing a supplier's modern slavery statement](#), CIPS Knowledge.
- Olga Martin-Ortega and Andy Davies (2017), [Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain. A Guide for Public Procurement Practitioners](#) (CIPS).
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Research Reports and Policy Briefs

- Olga Martin-Ortega and Anna Gorna (2020), [UK Modern Slavery Act Transparency in Supply Chains: Reporting by Local Authorities](#), BHRE Research Series. Report No. 4, September 2020
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- Olga Martin-Ortega and Rahima Islam (2017), [UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 Transparency in Supply Chains: The First Year of Reporting by Universities](#), BHRE Research Series, Report 1.

Annex I: Modern Slavery Statements Analysed

The following Councils have published at least one MS statement which is available either on their website or the [Modern Slavery Statement Registry](#):

- Ashfield District Council
- Ashford Borough Council
- Barnsley Borough Council
- Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Belfast City Council
- Birmingham City Council*
- Blaby District Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Bradford City Council
- Breckland District Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- Bristol City Council
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council*
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Cardiff Council
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Castle Point District Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Chelmsford City Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Chichester District Council*
- City of London Council
- City of York Council
- Colchester Borough Council*
- County Durham Council*
- Coventry City Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Cumbria County Council
- Dartford Borough Council*
- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire County Council*
- Devon County Council
- Doncaster Council*
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- Dorset Council*
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council*
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- East Hampshire District Council*
- East Lindsey District Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- East Suffolk Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Eastbourne Borough Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council*
- Elmbridge Borough Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Essex County Council*
- Exeter City Council
- Fenland District Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Gwynedd Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Harlow District Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Havant Borough Council*
- Herefordshire Council
- Hertsmere Borough Council
- Horsham District Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Leeds City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Lewes District Council
- Lichfield District Council
- Lincoln City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Bexley

- London Borough of Camden
- London Borough of Croydon
- London Borough of Enfield
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Islington
- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Lewisham
- London Borough of Newham
- London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- London Borough of Southwark
- London Borough of Sutton
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- London Borough of Wandsworth
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Manchester City Council
- Medway Council*
- Mid Devon District Council
- Mid Suffolk District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council*
- Milton Keynes Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- New Forest District Council
- Newark & Sherwood District Council
- Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council
- Norfolk County Council **
- North Hertfordshire District Council
- North Northamptonshire Council
- North Somerset Council
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Nottingham City Council*
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Oxford City Council*
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Powys County Council*
- Preston City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Rochford District Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames*
- Runnymede Borough Council
- Ryedale District Council
- Salford City Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council*
- Sefton Borough Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Shropshire Council*
- Solihull Borough Council
- Somerset County Council*
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- South Derbyshire District Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- South Hams District Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- South Norfolk District Council
- South Tyneside Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- St Albans City Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Stockport Borough Council
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Sunderland City Council***
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Telford and Wrekin Borough Council
- Tendring District Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Torbay Council*
- Wakefield City Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warwickshire County Council*
- West Berkshire Council

- West Devon District Council
- West Lindsey District Council
- West Northamptonshire Council*
- West Suffolk Council*
- West Sussex County Council
- Wolverhampton City Council
- Worcestershire County Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

* Statement included in the Modern Slavery Statement Registry

** Listed on the Modern Slavery Statement Registry but no linked statement

*** Listed on the Modern Slavery Statement Registry but provides a link to a policy; statement separately available on their website

The following Councils were not included in this Research Report for the following reasons:

- East Northamptonshire Council, Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council are now North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council
- Canterbury City Council – the document linked on the LGA website is a policy not a statement
- West Lancashire Borough Council – has published a statement of intent, not a modern slavery statement

The following Councils have removed their previous statements, which can no longer be found on their websites, and we assume, have not published new statements during the course of the analysis carried out for this Research Report:

- Braintree District Council
- Cornwall Council
- Gateshead Council
- Newcastle-Under-Lyme District Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Annex II: Transparency in Supply Chains Reporting: Aide Memoire (Updated 2020)

MANDATORY (FORMAL) REQUIREMENTS	
DO	DON'T
Publication and Accessibility	
Report annually on the past financial year within six months of your organisation's financial year-end	Report either in advance of the end of a financial year or after six months of your organisation's financial year
Improve the statement year on year - it is a live document	Reproduce your old statement with minor word changes or merely altered dates
Keep a record of old statements accessible to the public (providing URL links etc). This allows for progress to be monitored	Delete old statements, only have the current statement publicly available
Publish the statement in a prominent place on your website, eg bottom of homepage or obvious drop-down menu	Publish it in a place difficult to find or password protected
Formulation and Approval Process	
Ensure the statement is approved at the highest level and signed by a senior member of the organisation (chief executive/leader of the council); providing their post and name, signature and approval date	Leave the statement unsigned/dated or in draft format; simply state it has been approved without specifying
Ensure the statement is a genuine reflection of your business, practices, and culture	Use templates without making the statement your own
Formulate the statement as a collaboration between departments, with procurement teams leading and others participating eg human resources, legal and safeguarding teams	Leave it to one department or person to write the statement without input and contribution of others
Provide relevant information in your statement with sufficient detail	Use the statement to showcase non-Modern Slavery and human rights related activities and overwhelm the reader with excessive details, ie too much legal or technical information

SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT OF STATEMENTS	
DO	DON'T
Organisational Policies	
Showcase your Modern Slavery policy if you have it and explain the link between your existing policies and Modern Slavery	List or reproduce all of your organisational policies
Amend existing policies to include references to Modern Slavery or create a standalone Modern Slavery policy	Refer to policies that have no relation to Modern Slavery
If approving a standalone Modern Slavery policy, clearly set out the obligations on staff, suppliers, business partners and agents, as well as procedures to be followed	Create a Modern Slavery policy composed of a collection of empty statements with no clear impact on your council's work and behaviour eg. merely referring to a zero tolerance approach is not enough
Clearly state who is responsible for the implementation of the relevant policies, how implementation will be monitored and how it should be reported on	Publish a policy without a responsible department/person and an enforcement, reporting and review mechanism
Circulate policies in your organisation and relevant parties to make it known to all and explain how this is done in the statement	Have policies your staff, constituents and customers, business partners, suppliers and other stakeholders don't know about and wouldn't be able to find unaided
Due Diligence: Identifying and Prioritising Risks	
Show you understand the risks of abuse your organisation and practices pose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • towards your own staff • related to recruitment practices (including use of agencies) • related to sub-contracting • related to the products/services you procure • in your supply chains. 	Reproduce the risks found in other statements or templates without assessing how they relate to your own practice and suppliers
Consider risks associated by country; sector; transaction; and business partnerships as set out in Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains Guide for Commercial & Procurement Professionals	State that procuring solely from the UK means your supply chains are at a low or no risk of Modern Slavery. Modern Slavery is occurring every day in public sector supply chains in the UK
Highlight your high-risk areas, whether product or service based, in your supply chain	Merely list all products or services procured
Prioritise risks and focus on high-risk supply chain mapping	Try to map all of the supply chain at once
Understand that risks may change	Reproduce the same risks year on year in your statement

MANDATORY (FORMAL) REQUIREMENTS	
DO	DON'T
Due Diligence: Preventing, Mitigating and Remediating Abuses	
<p>Ensure that you have functioning and responsible procurement and contract management due diligence procedures to minimise risks of modern slavery taking place within domestic and global supply chains. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referrals, site visits and spot checks • contractual provisions and contract monitoring and management • asking for suppliers to provide their own due diligence of their sub-contractors and supply chains • use online modern slavery risk identification and management tool such as the government's Modern Slavery Assessment Tool (MSAT) 	<p>Do not make vague and generalised declarations stating that you take all appropriate measures without providing details</p>
<p>Seek assurances from suppliers during the tendering process. Ask the questions up front and probe responses, where appropriate</p> <p>Pre-procurement specification, questionnaires and checklists can be found in Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains</p>	<p>Solely rely on a checklist and allow this to become a tick box exercise</p>
<p>Introduce Modern Slavery related clauses into contracts and terms and conditions and use them to engage with suppliers meaningfully, making your expectations clear</p>	<p>Simply inform suppliers of your policies or ask them for theirs and seek vague anti-slavery assurances</p>
<p>Work with suppliers to create action plans, take corrective measures, and if suppliers refuse to cooperate, consider measures against them</p>	<p>Immediately terminate the business relationship</p>
<p>When contracting services robustly question recruitment processes</p>	<p>Use minimal vetting techniques, or state that you use 'reputable recruitment agencies' which you have not assessed</p>
<p>Report on planned monitoring and auditing measures for your own sites and sites of your suppliers</p>	<p>Outsource the responsibility to your suppliers, merely assuming they will carry out adequate monitoring</p>
<p>When using third party audits engage in the process and create action plans</p>	<p>Rely on the audit without a follow-up</p>
<p>Identify and report violations, and address how you will mitigate them</p>	<p>Hide or dismiss violations or rely on suppliers to resolve them when they take place lower down in your supply chain</p>

MANDATORY (FORMAL) REQUIREMENTS	
DO	DON'T
Establish Modern Slavery working groups internally in which relevant departments are involved to address instances where you have identified risks or actual abuse	Make due diligence the responsibility of one sole individual or department in the institution – it is an organisation wide process.
Review these procedures annually and continuously seek to innovate and improve on these over time	Be complacent that current due diligence practices will always mitigate the risk of Modern Slavery in your supply chains - unscrupulous suppliers will always be looking for new ways to exploit the situation
Collaborating with External Partners	
Provide details of your collaboration with external partners, including the measures taken	Sign up to partnerships or collaborations, expecting for them to resolve the problem for you
Collaborate within your sector and share good practice	Treat the statement as a competition or a trade secret
Seek to collaborate with organisations working in different sectors that can help you manage modern slavery risks – for example Electronics Watch4who provides intelligence, collaboration and support about working conditions in factories that assemble IC.	Think you can combat Modern Slavery on your own, pooling resources and intelligence will often be required.
Measuring Effectiveness and Planning for the Future	
Report on how you will measure effectiveness and who is responsible for this measurement	State the procedures have been reviewed without indicating the assessment and impact they had
Provide information on existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Make vague and general commitments for the coming years
Ensure KPIs are Modern Slavery related, including responsible procurement KPIs	List commitments which are not directly relevant
Track progress at short, medium and long term, and allow for substantive measurement	Fail to assess and report on the effectiveness of measures undertaken
Review your aims, goals and KPIs annually, with distinct future goals	Reproduce the same KPIs year on year without measuring their effectiveness
Be honest, if you've not had much success it's fine to be upfront about this whilst striving to improve in the future	Be afraid of publishing a lack of progress or hide setbacks

MANDATORY (FORMAL) REQUIREMENTS	
DO	DON'T
Training and Capacitation	
Provide Modern Slavery specific training which is relevant to your organisation	Cite training unrelated to Modern Slavery in your statement or provide training which is not relevant to your work
Provide training to all staff, including refreshers and new courses	Reduce Modern Slavery training to induction processes for new staff
Provide targeted Modern Slavery supply chain and contract management training for relevant staff, especially to procurement teams, contract managers, trading standards, compliance, legal and finance teams	Use a one fits all approach
Use external and internal training	Outsource all training responsibilities to consultants

Notes

ⁱ Statements have been found in the individual websites of Councils, relying on [the list compiled by the Local Governments Authority \(LGA\)](#) and the government [Modern Slavery Statement Registry](#). Despite upmost care having been put into identifying statements, some are not readily available and easily identifiable. Hyperlinks are provided for the statements noted and quoted, available at the time of writing.

ⁱⁱ On 10 May 2022 the Queen's speech announced a new Modern Slavery Bill, which would strengthen the protection and support for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, increase the accountability of organisations in driving out modern slavery from their supply chains and expand the scope of the transparency reporting obligation to public authorities. See as well, Home Office, [Transparency in supply chains consultation. Government response](#) (22 September 2020).

ⁱⁱⁱ The most recent statement covering the current reporting period of 2021/2022, see [LGA Modern Slavery Statement 2021/2022](#)

^{iv} This includes the statements of the following Councils: [Belfast City Council](#); [Cardiff Council](#); [Ashford Borough Council](#); [Buckinghamshire Council](#); [Derbyshire County Council](#); [Dudley Borough Council](#); [Hertsmere Borough Council](#); [Isle of Wight Council](#); [London Borough of Bexley](#); [London Borough of Camden](#); [Portsmouth City Council](#); [Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea](#); [Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames](#); [Sandwell Borough Council](#); [South Cambridgeshire District Council](#); [South Tyneside Borough Council](#); [Suffolk County Council](#); [Warrington Borough Council](#) and [Worcestershire County Council](#)

^v Statements that could only be found using a search engine include [Carmarthenshire County Council \(Cyngor Sir Gaerfyrddin\)](#); [Crawley Borough Council](#); [Fenland District Council](#); [London Borough of Sutton](#); [Salford City Council](#); [Sefton Borough Council](#) and [Tamworth Borough Council](#).

^{vi} [Calderdale Borough Council](#)

^{vii} A total of seven councils have been identified to have done this, including: [Ashford Borough Council](#); [Chesterfield Borough Council](#); [Crawley Borough Council](#); [Herefordshire Council](#); [Horsham District Council](#); [Rotherham Borough Council](#); and [Southampton City Council](#).

^{viii} [The City of London](#) has not produced a new statement, but updated the old one. We encourage the council to produce a new statement for the next financial year. The original [City of London Statement 2018/2019](#) is still available on the Council website.

^{ix} [Annex E, p.27](#)

^x See [Portsmouth City Council](#); [Northumberland County Council](#); [North Warwickshire Borough Council](#)