

Modern Slavery Statement

Introduction

Modern slavery is a crime resulting in an abhorrent abuse of human rights. It is constituted in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 by the offences of 'slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour' and 'human trafficking'.

Heart of Mercia Trustees are committed to ethical and responsible practices in all aspects of its operations, including the prevention of slavery and human trafficking. The Trust will not tolerate modern slavery and encourage all those employed by the Trust, or associated with it, to take a proactive approach to tackling this type of crime. Trustees have not had cause to believe that modern slavery practices have occurred within the Trust or within its supply chains, but remain keenly aware of the need for continued vigilance.

1. Structure and Supply Chains

Heart of Mercia Trust is a multi-academy trust which included sixth form colleges and secondary schools in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

The Trust's main business operations are in the provision of education. It is supported by a large number of suppliers of various sizes.

2. Policies on Modern Slavery

Heart of Mercia has a zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking. Trustees have not deemed it necessary to produce a free-standing policy on modern slavery. Instead, this statement is shared with Executive leaders, Chief Financial Officer, HR Director, Safeguarding and Estates Coordinators in order to ensure that relevant policies have regard to Heart of Mercia's duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

We maintain strong safeguarding procedures for all our students/pupils.

3. Due Diligence Process

Extensive due diligence activities take place in relation to institutions or schools due to join the Trust. Detailed HR and contracts information is gathered as part of this process and any irregularity is challenged prior to conversion, then addressed upon conversion if it is outstanding.

4. Risk Assessment

The risk of systemic modern slavery within the Trust itself is deemed to be low. This is because recruitment to the Trust takes place within a highly professional framework and employees and many volunteers are subject to legal checks, including Right to Work and DBS. Trustees are, however, clear that any instance of modern slavery is one too many and are clear on the need to maintain vigilance.

The risk of systemic modern slavery within the Trust's supply chains is assessed to be low. Procurement processes are such that reputable firms are contracted and, where cost effective, larger contractors with their own modern slavery statements or policies are used.

5. Measuring Effectiveness

Heart of Mercia will regularly review and update this statement to reflect changes in our operations and policies. We will report any concerns related to slavery and human trafficking to the relevant authorities as required by law. The Trust's Finance and Resources Committee will receive an annual update alongside the draft modern slavery statement for the relevant year.

6. Training for Staff

All staff receive training in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024), which includes reference to child criminal exploitation. We provide regular training and awareness programs to staff, governors and Trustees to recognise and report any concerns related to slavery or human trafficking.

Heart of Mercia is committed to taking all necessary steps to prevent slavery and human trafficking within our organization and supply chains. We will continue to work towards ensuring that our educational institutions are free from these practices.