

Modern slavery statement 2024/25

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This statement sets out the steps taken during financial year 2024/25 by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (WYFRA), published in accordance with section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Transparency in Supply Chains) Regulations 2015.

Modern slavery is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide spectrum of crime, including (but not limited to):

- Slavery - ownership of another person as personal property.
- Servitude - complete control over a person short of owning them.
- Forced and compulsory labour - work performed involuntarily due to the threat of punishment.
- Child labour Illegal or exploitative - work performed by a child.
- Human trafficking - movement of people without their consent for the purpose of exploiting them.
- Bonded labour - forced work to repay a debt.

Our ambition.

Sadly, modern slavery exists and is often hidden from sight and difficult to spot. The [2021 UK annual report on modern slavery](#) reports that since the Modern Slavery Act became law, the number of live police operations increased from 188 in December 2016 to 3,335 in August 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic played a part in increasing and creating new opportunities for human trafficking and, as the report sets out, is believed to have negatively impacted referral numbers as a result of the restrictions. Measuring the impact is difficult, so this number could be much higher.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has forced many people from their homes, fleeing their war-torn country. Whilst there has been a huge global effort to support the innocent victims of the conflict, the reality is that many join the vulnerable people in society who may be at risk.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) adopts a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and a commitment to acting ethically and with integrity. Together with our partners and

suppliers, we take our responsibility to drive change seriously, empowering every member of staff and elected members to act on any concerns they might identify, working together towards freedom from slavery, persecution and exploitation.

This statement shares the actions WYFRS has taken so far and our commitment on our intentions to continue to combat modern slavery.

Who are we?

[West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority](#) is the 4th largest Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authority in the country serving a population of over 2.2m residents covering an area of 800 square miles, made up of the metropolitan areas of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield, providing emergency cover 24-hours a day, 365 days a year. The area is diverse both in terms of topography and culture providing cover for the major cities of Leeds and Bradford as well as the valleys in the Holme and Calder Valley, each providing differing challenges. WYFRS is traditionally a low-cost organisation having the fourth lowest precept at band D of all fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales and is proud of its record as a high performing service.

The Authority's activities are governed by the Home Office, legislative responsibilities as set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Fire and Rescue Framework for England and by the West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority which has 22 elected Members from across the five above named local authorities.

The ambition of WYFRS is 'Making West Yorkshire Safer' and our priorities to achieve this ambition are;

- Provide a safe, effective and resilient response to local and national emergencies.
- Focus our activities on reducing risk and vulnerability.
- Enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our people.
- Prioritise a people first mindset through ethical and professional leadership and management.
- Work with partners and communities to deliver our services.
- Use resources in an innovative, sustainable, and efficient manner to maximise value for money.
- Further develop a culture of excellence, equality, learning, and inclusion.

WYFRS delivers the following services;

- Prevention - Raising awareness about the risks people face to prevent emergencies and reduce vulnerability.
- Protection - Promoting and enforcing the fire safety measures required by law to ensure buildings and occupants are protected.
- Response - Preparing for and responding to emergencies.
- Resilience - Being able to deal with major emergencies and disruptions locally and nationally whilst continuing to deliver our critical services.

WYFRS is committed to acting in a socially responsible way and to influencing others with whom we work to do the same. In accordance with the Social Value Act 2012 WYFRS considers social value in our decisions about how we spend our resources and in addition, we want to ensure that suppliers we work with have the potential to make a major contribution to delivering social value.

WYFRS is a National Living Wage employer which means:

- We are committed to paying all employees at least the National Living Wage and ensure that casual workers engaged directly by WYFRS are paid at least the National Living Wage;
- We ensure that we engage with suppliers encouraging them to pay at least the National Living Wage to people delivering WYFRS contracts.

WYFRS employs over 1,400 staff working in our forty fire stations and at our Headquarters site, all playing their part in promoting safety and wellbeing across all the communities in West Yorkshire.

Due to our comprehensive People and Culture policies and processes, WYFRS considers the risk of slavery, including forced labour, to be extremely low in our directly employed workforce.

WYFRS's safeguarding policy and procedures are established to make sure the Service helps to protect the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk. WYFRS has a safeguarding policy and guidance that includes activities that are undertaken to protect specific children, young people and adults who are suffering, or likely to suffer, abuse harm or neglect.

Staff are also mandated to undertake a DBS check during onboarding and every three years thereafter.

Procurement.

WYFRS's annual third party spend is circa £18m - £20m and may source a variety of goods and services from numerous countries worldwide (excluding Russia or Belarus) via our contracts. WYFRS considers issues such as equality, human rights, labour standards, environmental management and bribery and corruption seriously and remains clear regarding our expectations of suppliers prior to entering into and throughout our contractual relationships.

WYFRS's [Procurement Strategy](#) and the Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard reiterates our commitment to acting ethically, with integrity and to implementing and maintaining effective systems and controls to ensure that Modern Slavery is not taking place within our supply chain.

As part of its approach to risk, WYFRS uses a selection questionnaire within our procurement process. This enables an assessment of prospective bidders' credentials and the ability to determine whether they have breached their obligations in the field of social and labour law. Bidders convicted of certain modern slavery offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 within the last 5 years risk being excluded from public procurements, unless they can demonstrate that they have taken measures to remedy these failures and prevent their recurrence.

The Procurement Act 2023, introduced in February 2025 includes a [debarment list](#) which aims to minimise supplier-related risk in public procurement and incentivise suppliers to achieve excellent corporate compliance and standards of behaviour. A Minister of the Crown can make the decision to put a supplier on the debarment list. WYFRS's Procurement Team check the debarment list in each above threshold procurement process and must exclude (or have a discretion to exclude) suppliers if they are on the debarment list.

Our progress.

WYFRS uses an extensive supply chain to navigate the challenging landscape in terms of continuity of critical supply of goods and services required for our front-line. WYFRS provides greater transparency in our supply chains collaborating closely with our suppliers and our risk-based approach to due diligence is crucial. As a publicly funded organisation, WYFRS ensures absolute transparency in all of our purchasing decisions and practices.

We continue to work with our suppliers to ensure that they are committed to providing training to their staff and their sub-contracted suppliers on modern slavery risks and compliance.

Policies and controls.

WYFRS are committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. As such, the following policies and processes are in place:

- Modern Slavery Policy
- SaySo reporting tool.
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Procedure

In the event that a modern slavery risk is identified, our Modern Slavery Policy provides links to comprehensive statutory guidance to ensure that the appropriate action is swiftly taken.

Process and risk.

WYFRS signposts staff to the process of raising a concern through guidance published on our internal systems, mandatory safeguarding training and posters that are on show in all of our buildings.

WYFRS includes obligations on our suppliers by introducing modern slavery compliance clauses in contracts and relevant procurement projects. As a result, our suppliers are obligated to take steps to investigate and identify issues relating to the Modern Slavery Act and to notify WYFRS immediately if they become aware of any issues within their supply chains.

Training and awareness.

All frontline staff, including Control operators, complete a mandatory e-learning package. Completion is recorded in the internal Competency Dashboard system for operational staff and in the Learning Management System for support staff. Staff repeat the e-learning package every three years.

All other staff with advisory and decision-making responsibilities in the process receive face-to-face training every three years.

Collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

Compliance and positive steps towards change relies on teamwork and our partnerships are integral for WYFRS in addressing modern slavery risks.

Key organisations and initiatives we continue to partner with are:

Partner	Who	Issues/Areas of work	Working together
The Salvation Army	24/7 support	Modern Slavery Helpline available 24/7.	Support provided via the helpline if concerns are identified/further advice needed.
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	Non-Departmental Public Body set up to protect vulnerable and exploited workers.	Investigate reports of worker exploitation and illegal activity such as human trafficking, forced labour and illegal labour provision, as well as offences under the National Minimum Wage and Employment Agencies Acts.	Point of reference for knowledge, skills and experience in terms of all aspects of human rights abuse.
West Yorkshire Police	Emergency services partner	First responders for modern slavery issues.	Sharing of information if detected to help trace individuals.
UK Fire and Rescue Services	Fire and Rescue Sector	Sharing of information and learning.	Receipt of model template for Modern Slavery Policy for adopted sector wide.
SaySo	All staff	Anonymous reporting tool for all staff.	Partnership with SaySo (from September 2022)

Looking ahead

Combatting modern slavery is important to WYFRS and it is everyone's responsibility to promote changing this distressing reality and that WYFRS can be a positive force to this cause.

WYFRS are committed to ensuring that there are no forms of modern slavery in our supply chains or business operations. It is our responsibility to continually improve transparency; to seek out, identify and resolve problems and risks; to regularly review our procurement practices; to collaborate with others to protect the rights of workers, particularly those who are or may be vulnerable to abuse such as modern slavery and continually review our efforts to ensure that we mitigate negative human rights impacts on vulnerable people in our supply chains. We must remain particularly aware of emerging risks and be alert to the dynamic nature of modern slavery.

Our commitments for the next year are to gain greater visibility throughout our supply chain. We will continue to take steps to implement our human rights due diligence processes, in line with all current and forthcoming legislation, ensuring that our contractual terms and conditions align to all

relevant legislation and we will continue to work with our suppliers to ensure that the stated procurement criteria on modern slavery are met. Our programme of training and awareness will continue to be updated and delivered accordingly, ensuring that our staff remain fully aware of what they can do to help tackle modern slavery in their daily lives.

WYFRS confirms our commitment to working with not just our staff but also with our suppliers, customers, other stakeholders and partners to continue to drive change and make modern slavery a thing of the past.

WYFRS intends during the next twelve months to:

- Review and risk assess our most important existing contracts and undertake random sampling of lower value requirements.
- Place a stronger emphasis on effective contract management.
- Focus on improvements that suppliers can make to their ways of working.
- Review new commercial agreements considering modern slavery risk management, assurance and prevention proposals.
- Review SaySo complaints and identify modern slavery considerations, taking appropriate action.
- Ensure the Procurement Act 2023 requirements in regard to Modern Slavery are met.