

STRATEGY

Birmingham City Council

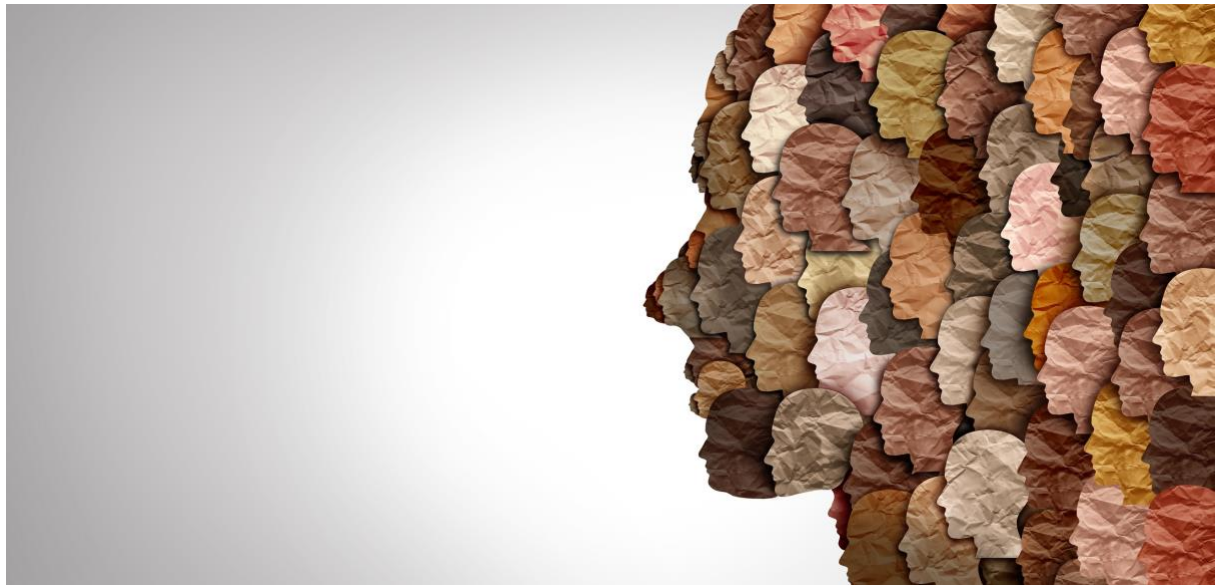
Implementation of the Co-operative Party Charter Against Modern Slavery

In July 2021, Birmingham City Council signed the Co-operative Party's Charter Against Modern Slavery. The charter takes a 10-step approach, ensuring that local authorities work proactively to ensure there are no instances of modern slavery taking place within their supply chains. It commits us to:

1. Training our procurement team to understand modern slavery through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply's online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply.
2. Requiring contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination as a potential sanction for non-compliance.
3. Challenge any abnormally low-cost tenders to ensure they do not rely upon the potential contractor practising modern slavery.
4. Highlight to suppliers that contracted workers are free to join a trade union and are not to be treated unfairly for belonging to one.
5. Publicise our whistle-blowing system for staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
6. Require our tendered contractors to adopt a whistle-blowing policy which enables their staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
7. Review our contractual spending regularly to identify any potential issues with modern slavery.
8. Highlight for our suppliers any risks identified concerning modern slavery and refer them to the relevant agencies to be addressed.
9. Refer for investigation via the National Crime Agency's national referral mechanism any of our contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery.
10. Report publicly on the implementation of the charter annually through our Modern Slavery Transparency Statement.

As Europe's largest local authority, Birmingham is the biggest council to sign the Co-operative Party's charter. We know that the supply chains for our council services are vast, including anything from waste disposal to construction, and so this will continue to be a significant and ongoing piece of work.

As part of the preparation for the charter, we completed a self-assessment against each of the 10 points. We ensured that we provided enhanced training for our procurement staff; reviewed our internal modern slavery training; offered enhanced training to Modern Slavery Champions across the council, and actively encouraged all employees to report serious wrongdoing through a publicised whistleblowing hotline.



Modern Slavery Transparency Statement

The charter requires us to report on its implementation in our annual Modern Slavery Transparency Statement, so it was perfect timing to review and sign our 2021/22 statement. We knew that forthcoming legislation would make this mandatory for local authorities, and so in preparation we structured our 2021/22 Transparency Statement in line with the new guidelines.

Modern Slavery Transparency Statements are primarily focused on procurement and supply chain management, but many organisations also use it as a space to briefly touch on some of the modern slavery actions they have been taking. We decided to do the same, and also included some ambitious commitments for the year ahead. These included:

Survivor Care for Adults: As a local authority, we recognise that we have statutory duties to proactively identify and respond to survivors, and that this extends to both adults and children. We also recognise that without effective pathways to receive appropriate and tailored support, it is extremely challenging for survivors to make themselves known to the local authority and exit exploitation.

We committed to reviewing our modern slavery pathways – both internally and in partnership with key external organisations - to ensure that these are robust and effective; offer effective safeguarding of individuals; and are subject to regular monitoring and evaluation.

Co-Production and Ethical Imagery: We also made a commitment to including the voices of modern slavery survivors in the development of our work, and to the use of ethical language and imagery around modern slavery. That means not using sexualised, misleading, or

triggering images of modern slavery survivors (for example, someone tied up with ropes around their arms) and considering how we talk about the issue of modern slavery and portray survivors.

We want to ensure we are framing this as a structural issue of safeguarding and abuse, where a survivor has agency and dignity, and not resorting to language centred on saving and rescuing helpless people. We want our approach as a local authority to ensure respect, dignity, and choice for survivors of modern slavery. We would encourage others to both hold us accountable and consider how they might do similar in their work.

For further information contact:

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