

York St John University

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

21 November 2024

Introduction

This statement is designed to satisfy the requirements of section 54 (1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes the University's slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31 July 2024 outlining the steps York St John University has taken to combat modern slavery, human trafficking, forced and bonded labour and labour rights violations in its own business and in its supply chains.

About the University

York St John University is a higher education establishment, with a student population of over 12,000 students. It employs 1121 permanent and fixed term staff (985 FTE), as well as 796 casual staff. The University has an annual turnover of around £89million and spends around £47m per annum on goods and services.

Our commitment

Our values underpin all that we do. We are committed to improving our business practices to minimise modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms, and to ensure that we are not unintentionally complicit in any human rights violations. We are committed to zero tolerance of slavery and human trafficking or child labour practices.

Our staff

The University mitigates the risk of modern slavery occurring in its workforce by having in place robust staff recruitment and selection policies and procedures, supplemented by training for managers.

In 2022 we partnered with Rightcheck to help us undertake Right to Work checks which enables greater control over crucial pre-employment verification and compliance checks. All Right to Work documentation is checked prior to employment commencing or casual workers being engaged. The University's Code of Conduct for staff requires employees to adhere to the employment policies of the University.

As an equal opportunities employer, we're committed to creating and ensuring a non-discriminatory and respectful working environment for our staff. We want all our staff to feel confident that they can expose wrongdoing without any risk to themselves. and a Whistleblowing Policy is in place for members of staff to raise any concerns.

The University has made a commitment to honouring the Living Wage for all our employees, full time or fractional, as well as casual workers.

Agency staff are only recruited through established and reputable sources that can provide assurance that they comply fully with the requirements of the legislation relating to the rights and welfare of their workers. In the main these are Agencies who have been engaged through North Eastern Universities Purchasing Consortium (NEUPC).

Our students

Although the risks of students experiencing occurrences of modern slavery or human trafficking through direct contact with the University are extremely low it is appreciated that whilst living within the local area they may become aware of such instances or on very rare occasions be entrapped into adopting the life style of a modern slave. To mitigate these circumstances, the University has in place easily accessible channels through which students can obtain assistance, support and advice on their wellbeing.

Our supply chain (2023/24)

The University's supply chain has been identified as the area of highest risk in terms of possible occurrences of modern slavery. In order to mitigate this risk, the following actions have been taken:

Under the University's Procurement policy, as part of the standard supplier selection process all suppliers tendering for contracts must give evidence of their compliance with the Modern Slavery

Act 2015 in order to be eligible to enter a bid. This year the University also renewed its affiliate membership of Electronics Watch, the organisation which helps public sector organisations to work together and collaborate with civil society monitors in production regions, to protect the rights of workers in their supply chains when procuring electronic equipment.

The University has board level representation within the Higher Education Procurement Association (HEPA) and the North Eastern Universities Purchasing Consortium (NEUPC). It also holds membership of both the Yorkshire Procurement Organisation (YPO) and the Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC). The University is also part of the Responsible Procurement Network of institutions, formed with the aim of achieving a consistent approach across the region to responsible procurement throughout our activities. The group reviews and promotes good responsible procurement practice across our combined membership, aiding both consortia procurement professionals and our members to embed best practice within their procurement operations. Further objectives include the review of supply chain risks and provision of guidance in building supply chain resilience in relation to ethical procurement and the impacts of climate change.

These are all bodies dedicated to improving both the quality of procurement and the level of collaborative procurement across the HE sector. Together these collectives develop policies and practices to which all members, including York St John University, are committed. These set out the steps that must be taken in major contract procurement processes that are conducted by members, to help to ensure that slavery and human trafficking cannot flourish in the supply chain.

The University has a zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking. Any supplier or potential supplier who does not reflect our values or is found not to be compliant with the processes outlined above will be considered in-breach of their contractual responsibilities and removed from the University's supplier list. Such suppliers will not be invited to bid for future contract opportunities at the University until they are able to demonstrate full adherence with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act and the University's own policies and procedures.

The University recognises that continual vigilance and ongoing improvement is required in its supply chain management. Key suppliers are subjected to annual reviews to confirm, amongst other things, their quality of service, their commitment to high standards of delivery and their efforts to drive Modern Slavery from their own supply chains.

The University has a responsibility not to exert undue commercial pressure on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), who make up 24% of its third-party expenditure. In its efforts to obtain good value for money on behalf of our fee-paying students, the University will never abuse its relative position of purchasing power. We will not intentionally compel our suppliers or put them under such duress that they are coerced into adopting unethical business practices in order to meet our requirements. We will strive to use plain language in our legal and tendering documents to make clear the expectations we have of our suppliers and the obligations we will put on their people.

The University recognises there are complex issues that exacerbate the causes of modern slavery and contribute to its persistence in our society. In order to better inform and support our suppliers in eliminating these, we give explicit guidance notes within our tender documentation to help businesses improve their own understanding of the impact modern slavery has. This includes requirements to show:

Actions taken to identify and manage the risks of modern slavery in the delivery of their contract, including within their own supply chains.

Actions taken to identify and tackle inequality in employment, skills and pay in their contracted workforce.

To support in-work progression to help people, including those from disadvantaged or minority groups, to move into higher paid work by developing new skills relevant to their contract.

Influencing their own staff, suppliers, customers and communities through the delivery of their contracts in a manner that support strong, integrated communities.

Promoting Anti-Slavery Day (October 18th) on campus. This annual campaign is designed to improve understanding of the impact of modern slavery, the scope of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and highlight actions that individuals can take to help tackle modern slavery.

Our training

During the 2024-25 academic year, all staff will be required to complete mandatory training on safeguarding and prevent. This training will cover topics including slavery, human trafficking forced labour, and domestic servitude.

Our policies

We have developed Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy and Procedures that reflect our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business relationships and to implement

and enforce systems and controls to ensure our values are instilled within our purchase to pay cycle.

The University's Institute for Social Justice brings together expertise from right across our academic community and beyond, working alongside our students, external partners and the wider community. The Institute addresses issues of inequality and injustice across society, including modern slavery and human trafficking, by facilitating research, projects and partnerships that help to pursue and promote a fairer society.

More information can be found on our webpage [University's Whistleblowing Policy](#).

This statement has been approved by the Board of Governors and will be reviewed at least once annually.

Professor Karen Bryan OBE

Vice Chancellor

21 November 2024