

Modern slavery statement 2021/22

This statement sets out the steps taken during 2021/22 by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and is 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.

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 has 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 is probably much higher and increasing.

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 are at risk.

Protection and prevention is vitally important to West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS). Together with our partners and Suppliers, we take our responsibility to drive change seriously, empowering every member of staff 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 what we intend to do to help 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 ribbon valleys in the Holme and Calder Valley, each providing differing challenges. WYFRS is traditionally a low-cost organisation having the third lowest precept at bands B and 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 Guiding Principles to achieve this ambition are;

- Focus on risk and vulnerability;
- Be part of our Communities;
- Work in partnership;
- Be at our best and strive to improve;
- Make a positive difference in everything we do;
- Promote diversity and create an inclusive workplace.

In order to achieve our ambition, 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, as far as possible, to pay at least the National Living Wage to people delivering WYFRS contracts.

WYFRS employs approximately 1,400 staff working in our 40 fire stations, Headquarters and Service Delivery Centre locations, all playing their part in promoting safety and wellbeing across all the communities in West Yorkshire.

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.

Procurement

WYFRS's annual spend with third parties is circa £18m - £20m and we currently 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 incredibly seriously and remains clear and straightforward regarding our expectations of Suppliers prior to entering into and throughout our contractual relationships.

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

Our progress: What are we doing about modern slavery?

WYFRS utilises an extensive global supplier base 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 working closely with our Suppliers and our risk-based approach to due diligence is crucial now more than ever. 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 workers and their local 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 (introduced September 2022)
- 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 intranet, 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, 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 and further advice needed.

Partner	Who	Issues/Areas of work	Working together
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 the organisation believes 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 most vulnerable to abuses 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, providing greater awareness of the living wage throughout our supply chains. Our programme of training and awareness will continue to be updated and rolled out accordingly, ensuring that our staff are fully aware of what they can do to help tackle modern slavery in their daily lives.

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