

Modern Slavery Statement

1. Introduction

At Carers First we are committed to ensuring that everyone we work with is treated with dignity and respect. It is also important to us that those we work with both internally and externally share our values and take all reasonable steps to combat behaviours which are inappropriate in our society.

We are therefore committed to collaborating with others to combat modern slavery and human trafficking in all forms. This statement sets out our approach to striving to ensure that modern slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any part of our operations or supply chains. It covers all direct employees, volunteers and externally contracted workers (for example, consultants).

This is Carers First's first formal Modern Slavery Statement; and we acknowledge we are still early in our journey. We need to ensure all of our policies, procedures and practices fully embed detecting and deterring modern slavery and unethical work practices, and are committed to developing a plan for implementation over the next two years which will address the areas set out in this statement.

2. Organisational Structure and Supply Chains

Carers First is a registered charity and works directly with, and for carers, providing personalised information, advice and support to enable carers to live their lives to the fullest. Our support is provided online, via a helpline and face to face in Medway, Lincolnshire, Essex, Southend-on-Sea, Hackney, Waltham Forest and Haringey.

Our charity is governed by a Board of Trustees and has two Committees: Finance and Risk Committee and the People and Governance Committee.. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the running of the charity and is supported by the Senior Leadership Team.

3. Policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking

Carers First commits to continuously monitoring its policies and procedures to ensure that we appropriately fulfil our commitment to ensuring that everyone we work with is treated with respect and dignity and all steps are taken to eliminate modern slavery and human trafficking. We will strive to ensure there is no modern slavery either within our own charity, or within the organisations we work with to deliver our services.

Modern Slavery can be defined as *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'* (Gov.uk).

We already have a strong foundation in place to build on in terms of our range of robust policies, procedures and training, for example, but not limited to:

Recruitment and Eligibility to Work - the charity has robust recruitment policies which are compliant with all UK legislation as well as undertaking all pre-employment checks in-line with

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best practice and safer recruitment standards. Employment checks, including 'right to work' checks, ensure we only employ people who have the right to work in the UK; and as such prevent us from employing anyone who has been trafficked and cannot legally work in the UK. Our staff are paid the real Living Wage, ensuring we do not support exploitative remuneration practices.

Safeguarding - all staff, trustees and volunteers undertake safeguarding training. Our safeguarding policy and procedure confirm our responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults and children from harm of any kind and all staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand the role they play in the protection of vulnerable adults and children.

Whistleblowing – a whistleblowing policy and procedure ensures that staff feel comfortable and protected to make disclosures where they feel it is in the interest of the public. Our policies and processes ensure concerns can be raised confidentially by staff, including externally as required.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Carers First recognises that true diversity in service delivery provision and within the staff group involves a willingness to identify and act on the barriers to fair and equal treatment. We are committed to ensuring everyone has the same opportunity to achieve their full potential. We do not support any form of discriminatory behaviour and we look for the same commitment from our partners and suppliers.

We are committed to using our policy and practice review processes to strengthen our policies over the next two years, with the aim of fully embedding principles and actions around detecting and deterring modern slavery and unethical work practices, recognising this statement as a starting point.

4. Due diligence processes in our business and supply chains

Our work is supported by external organisations and supply chains, and we operate robust processes and procedures in relation to our procurement activity.

We wish to ensure that all external organisations adhere to our policies and procedures that protect human rights, such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies.

As part of this approach, we aim not to contract with any supplier supporting modern day slavery or human trafficking. As part of our risk assessment will look at our due diligence process to prevent us from contracting with suppliers who do not have anti-slavery measures in place. We will develop a refreshed process for new suppliers, exploring an enhanced range of questions/indicators as to the ethical nature of their policies and practices. We will use a structured approach, with a checklist that ensures we are addressing key areas as part of the procurement process.

As contracts for existing suppliers come up for renewal, we aim to review their policy and practice around modern slavery and ethical work practices, to bring an enhanced level of diligence to this process.

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5. Training and capacity building with staff

Carers First is committed to making training available to staff in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking, and as such capacity building, to ensure the whole charity is working together to combat the effects.

Carers First staff undertake a series of training as part of their onboarding into the charity; and this includes training on key policies. All mandatory training is repeated annually or bi-annually to ensure that all staff receive refreshed and relevant details.

It is intended that Modern Slavery will be a mandatory training module for staff by the end of 2024. As part of our plan over the next year, we will also review our training offer to ensure that modern slavery and human trafficking principles, materials and resources are embedded in any other relevant training offers.

We will also build awareness-raising onto our communications with staff; for example, using our Staff Weekly Update newsletter to highlight key research or share good practice.

6. Areas of risk and mitigation actions

We will undertake a risk assessment to gain a better understanding if there is a risk of modern slavery within our operations and the source of these risks. We will then develop an action plan to mitigate against the risks identified.

7. Monitoring and performance

We will take the necessary steps to monitor our performance and effectiveness in terms of ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our operations or supply chains.

We intend to develop an appropriate range of performance indicators that will be reported to and monitored by our Senior Leadership Team. These may include areas such as suppliers' sign up and compliance with relevant policies and procedures, completion of checks on suppliers where relevant, and staff take-up up of relevant training.

This statement will be reviewed on an annual basis.

This statement has been signed by Alison Taylor, Chief Executive of Carers First, on behalf of the Board.