



# UKRI Modern Slavery Annual Statement 2019 – 2020

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## **Our Commitment**

### **About UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**

Launched in April 2018, UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Our organisation brings together the seven disciplinary research councils, Research England, which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England, and the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK.

Our vision is for an outstanding research and innovation system in the UK that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally. Research and innovation improve our lives and increase prosperity by creating knowledge that enables us to understand ourselves and the world around us, empowering us to tackle the many challenges we face as individuals and as communities, nationally and globally. We will work with partners to shape a dynamic, diverse and inclusive system of research and innovation in the UK that is an integral part of society

Our mission is to convene, catalyse and invest in close collaboration with others to build a thriving inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good. We bring together nine organisations with great depth and breadth of expertise, allowing us to connect research communities, institutions, businesses and wider society, in the UK and around the world. This combination enables us to work across the whole research and innovation system, informed by our networks and expertise. As the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation it is our responsibility to ensure the health of the system as a whole, now and in the future. As a steward of this system, we will work together with many other actors. These include our close partners at the heart of the research and innovation system such as Higher Education Institutions and institutes, innovative businesses, investors, not-for-profit organisations and policy makers, and a wider set of partners such as those in the education system and civil society. We will fulfil our stewardship role through the ways in which we catalyse, convene, incentivise, invest in and conduct research and innovation.

In pursuing our vision and mission, we will continue to harness the depth and breadth of our councils' expertise and engagement, working with partners right across the research and innovation system to facilitate the movement of people and ideas through the system. Together, we will deliver the Government's ambitions of a world class research and innovation sector that is at the heart of the UK's economic and social fabric for decades to come.

We are an independent organisation with a strong voice for research and innovation, both to government and internationally. We are principally funded through the Science Budget by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), supported and challenged by an independent chair and board. This statement covers the activities of UKRI, consisting of over 7,200 employees based in the UK, and colleagues seconded to overseas postings hosted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other stakeholders.



## **UKRI's Commitment to the Principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015**

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms which deprive a person of their liberty in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain; such as slavery, servitude, human trafficking and forced and compulsory labour. UKRI is committed to the principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the abolition of modern slavery and human trafficking.

# **Control Framework**

## **Recruitment, Selection and Resource Management**

At UKRI our recruitment processes are designed and managed to ensure that all prospective employees are legally entitled to work in the UK. Via our Baseline Personal Security Standard (BPSS) process, which consists of verification made up of the following 4 parts (RICE), we obtain assurance on:

- Right to work – Nationality and Immigration Status (including an entitlement to undertake the work in question)
- Identity – ID Data check (electronic identity authentication - name, address, aliases, links, accounts, etc.)
- Criminal Records – Search for unspent convictions only (Basic Disclosure)
- Employment history check – Confirmation of past 3 years employment (minimum) history / activity

Furthermore, UKRI has a rigorous suite of policies and a confidential Employee Assistance Programme all of which are designed to support and safeguard our employees.

## **Commercial Arrangements**

We are committed to ensuring transparency within our business and supply chain; and ensuring our approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking is consistent with our disclosure obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. We endorse the implementation and promotion of ethical business practises to protect our staff from abuse and exploitation and expect the same high standards from all our contractors, suppliers and other business partners. As part of our contracting processes we include specific prohibitions against the use of forced, compulsory or trafficked labour, or anyone held in slavery or servitude, whether adults or children. We expect that our suppliers will hold their own suppliers to the same high standards.

UKRI's procurement for goods and services is provided by a shared services provider, UK SBS. Our supply chain is extensive, and we procure goods and services from a wide range of suppliers. UK SBS have published their statement on Slavery & Human Trafficking which includes their mechanisms for guarding against modern slavery in their client's supply chains. This statement is published on the [UKSBS](#) website



## Relevant Policies

UKRI operates a series of policies to mitigate the risk of modern slavery and outlines the steps taken to prevent slavery and human trafficking in its operations; these include the [Code of Conduct](#), [Whistleblowing Policy](#), and the [Disciplinary Policy](#). UKRI has also published a policy on [Preventing Harm \(Safeguarding\) in Research and Innovation](#) and a [Safeguarding Policy](#), which includes International Safeguarding. These policies are accessible to all UKRI staff and the public and are currently being reviewed and modernised.

Whistleblowing Policy - UKRI encourages all its staff, customers and other business partners to report any concerns related to the direct activities, or the supply chains of, the organisation. This includes any circumstances that may give rise to an enhanced risk of slavery or human trafficking. UKRI's [whistleblowing procedure](#) is designed to provide a simple process for employees and other concerned parties to make disclosures, without fear of retaliation. Employees, customers or other concerned parties can also refer to the UK National Helpline at [www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org) or call 0800 012 1700.

## Modern Slavery Training and Awareness

Prior to the founding of UKRI, and the start of UKRI's first financial year, individual Councils introduced an e-learning Modern Slavery Awareness training tool accessible to UKRI staff.

In October 2019, the People, Finance and Operations Committee decided that all staff in Band G (Heads of Department/Function) and above would be required to take this training and discuss any risks that can be considered proactively within their teams. This group was enrolled, and the training plan was implemented in February 2020 with a deadline of October 2020. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> October 75% of staff in Band G have successfully completed the Modern Slavery Awareness Training. UKRI is working towards 100% completion by the end of the financial year.

Additional training will be offered to staff with a greater exposure to modern slavery risks and issues.

UKRI published the Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Policy in 2018 with guidance for employees, to ensure staff are fully informed about modern slavery and what to do if they suspect modern slavery is taking place within our business and supply chain, as well as in organisations benefiting from our funding.

# 2019 – 2020 Highlights

## Publishing of new Policies

In May 2020, UKRI published its Preventing Harm in Research and Innovation policy which aims to prevent and address sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, bullying, psychological abuse and physical violence in the research and innovation sector, building on good practice where it exists. The policy applies to all UKRI funded activities but is especially relevant to research and innovation activities that UKRI funds in resource poor settings or in fragile or conflicted affected regions or countries where the risk of modern slavery may be higher. The policy sets out our expectations of individuals and organisations involved in the research and innovation activities that we fund and the actions that will be taken if these expectations are not met.



## Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights

UKRI has committed £10 million over 5 years to fund the Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights (Modern Slavery PEC). The centre was created to address the gap in high-quality academic research, policymaking and law-making, as well as frontline work with people directly affected by modern slavery. The programme is being actively supported by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund, with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Home Office. More recently the *Virtual International Conference: Assisting and Protecting Survivors of Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking & Forced Labour*, organised in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK), marked the official opening of the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre.

## Response to the COVID-19 global pandemic

In March, UKRI launched its COVID-19 urgency grants scheme, which offers rapid response funding to projects that examine the impact of the pandemic and seek to mitigate it. Through this mechanism, UKRI is supporting research into the increased vulnerability to modern slavery resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding the needs of victims and survivors, the link between human trafficking and child criminal exploitation, and the unanticipated effects of policies responding to the pandemic. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, UKRI has funded three awards which will last for six months, worth a combined £320,000 in the following areas:

- 'Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Modern Slavery in Global Garment Supply Chains', Prof. Genevieve LeBaron, University of Sheffield
- 'Tackling Modern Slavery in Malaysian Medical Gloves Factories Using a Whole-Systems Approach to the Supply Chain', Prof. Alex Hughes, Newcastle University
- 'Sharing Good Practices in Protection of Workers and Victims of Modern Slavery During the COVID-19 Pandemic', Prof. Tomoya Obokata, Keele University

Further information and updates will be issued through the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre's website: [www.modernslaverypec.org](http://www.modernslaverypec.org).

## Work with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC)

A UKRI researcher at the University of Nottingham's ['The Rights Lab'](#): from the Gateway to Research scheme worked with the [IASC](#) on a three-month project supported through the UKRI-funded Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (PaCCS). The placement in the IASC started at the beginning of 2020, looking particularly at the evidence for the support available for victims of modern slavery once they are within the National Referral Mechanism. They identified many elements of good practice and made some recommendations to improve collaborative working. The findings have been presented to the UKRI-funded Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre's independent Advisory Group, where they are informing their input to the running of this SPF programme. The PaCCS programme funded a second Doctoral placement in Spring 2020, this time with the [Transparency in Supply Chains \(TISC\) Report](#). The placement involved working with TISC's Supply Chain data, aiming to identify indicators of potential criminal activity.



## Planning Ahead

### Next Steps

During 2020 – 2021 UKRI will undertake the following activities, to be reported on in future Modern Slavery and Trafficking Statements;

- Ensure that Modern Slavery awareness training is completed by all employees who are involved in the procurement of services and products into UKRI;
- Ensure that all senior staff (Band G and above) complete awareness training, and discuss the issues within their teams to raise awareness and assist in the management of risks;
- Focus on the training of key employees working overseas and employees involved in direct engagement with, and research funding to, universities and industry;
- The essential learning framework currently under development will include Modern Slavery Training as one of its key elements.
- Monitor the use of employee grievance mechanisms for any association with modern slavery;
- Monitor procurement activities delivered through our 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider, UK SBS, and any other 3<sup>rd</sup> party providers;
- Monitor the audit process and completion of risk assessments carried out in procurement activity; and
- Respond to guidance and changes in legislation on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and leaving the European Union.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes UKRI's slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31 March 2020.

Ottoline Leyser

Chief Executive Officer

14 December 2020