

Modern Slavery Statement - 2024

Our Commitment

Helping Hands home care is passionately committed to maintaining high standards throughout our dealings with employees, customers and suppliers, conducting every aspect of our business with inclusivity, honesty, integrity and openness. We will continue to review and seek feedback on our practices, to meet these standards.

Key elements that we seek to address:

Policy

We are committed to ensuring that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in any part of our business. We have a defined clear policy for our staff and expect this to be adhered to, always. The policy is communicated to all staff, through onboarding and inductions, to encourage them to act responsibly. A reminder is issued each year when the Modern Slavery Statement is also reviewed and updated. We want our staff to feel confident that they can expose wrongdoing without any risk to themselves.

Risk Management

We have identified that our greatest potential risks in relation to modern slavery could be in our recruitment and in parts of our supply chain. A risk management approach has been taken to help us identify and understand the potential risks and to ensure we can respond appropriately to any challenges. We will continue to review this approach and seek to strengthen our processes.

We recognise that workers recruited from overseas are a hugely valuable part of our business and whilst international recruitment itself is not a risk that leads to modern slavery, we are mindful that a shortage of staff in social care, along with changes to immigration visas, has introduced concerns and increased the risk of both mistreatment of the existing workforce and unethical international recruitment practices. There are significant risks for workers travelling to the UK on health and care visas, which can leave them vulnerable to unscrupulous employers and recruitment agencies. These practices are incompatible with our values.

During 2022 we appointed Tyler Bladon Practical Ethics (<https://www.practicaethics.co.uk/>) to undertake an independent Ethical Standards review of our organisation. Amongst other areas their review considered the potential for Modern Slavery within our business and confirmed that there are robust, focused processes in place that reduce the risk of mistreatment and/or exploitation of the workforce. They concluded their review by saying they 'had witnessed some excellent practices that would certainly benefit other service providers within the UK.'

Awareness

At Helping Hands, we recognise our responsibility to ensure staff are aware of the reality of modern slavery in the UK and worldwide. We provide induction training that enables staff to recognise and respond to any instances of modern slavery - during work time or otherwise. The Helping Hands Modern Slavery Statement will be updated and published annually.

This Statement has been approved by the Executive Board and is signed on their behalf by Emma Pearson, Chief Executive Officer.



May 2025

2024 Introduction

Since the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, the last decade has seen a year-on-year increase in the number of individuals being exploited through trafficking and modern slavery. Modern Slavery can take place in a wide range of employment sectors, and is being reported increasingly in health and social care. In addition to the potential risk to employees, people using our services may also be victims of modern slavery or human trafficking.

As a caring organisation Modern Slavery goes against our company values which have 'kindness' and 'integrity' at their core. As a large organisation we recognise the responsibility that we have to the thousands of people that we employ and support and are committed to preventing any slavery or human trafficking, taking all necessary steps to mitigate any potential risk.

Our Modern Slavery Statement reflects our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business relationships and to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure slavery and human trafficking is not taking place anywhere in our business or our supply chains.

Our Organisation

We have been providing quality home care since 1989 and are one of the largest and most experienced social care providers in England & Wales. We provide solutions that enable individuals to live well in the homes and communities they love. We operate a professional care service that enables independence and choice while providing comfort, companionship and support, whether it is for half an hour a week or 24 hours a day.

Our Policies

We have policies that ensure we are conducting business in an ethical and transparent manner, which are periodically reviewed and updated. These policies are accessible to all employees.

- We have a Modern Slavery Policy which is reviewed on an annual basis.
- Whistleblowing Policy. We encourage our customers, suppliers, and employees to use the Whistle Blowing policy to report any concerns, including issues regarding Modern Slavery. We have a process in place and clear steps to take if modern slavery was to be discovered in our business. This includes escalation to line management in the first instance, or contacting police if we believe someone is in immediate danger. If required, we would seek advice from the UK Government Modern Slavery Helpline 0800 0121 700.
- Complaints Policy. Whilst aimed at receiving complaints or concerns about our care provision or conduct, all complaints received will be fully investigated and appropriate remedial actions taken. We work collaboratively with our social care and health partners to ensure our safeguarding policies and procedures dovetail with local procedures and best practice.
- Recruitment and Selection Policy. Our robust Recruitment practices always respect human rights by ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all. All employees have agreed terms and conditions which accord with employment law and we have a commitment to pay our employees above national minimum wage regardless of age. We have a zero-tolerance approach to slavery, trafficking or forced labour.

Immigration Compliance Policy. Sets out the documents and processes required to ensure Right to Work checks are completed as part of our recruitment process and documents the process required to monitor visa renewals.

Our recruitment and people management processes are designed to ensure that all prospective employees are legally entitled to work in the UK and to safeguard employees from any abuse or coercion.

- An Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy. It is our policy to promote our business being conducted in an honest and ethical manner. We are committed to acting professionally, fairly and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships.

Training

We have incorporated training on modern slavery into the induction programme for all new carers. The training aims to increase awareness on modern slavery and human trafficking, explaining how to identify if this type of abuse is happening and what to do if it's thought to be taking place.

With the increased risk of Modern Slavery in the social care sector the decision has been taken to add Modern Slavery training as a mandatory requirement for all of our office teams.

We will ensure that all employees are made aware of our Modern Slavery Policy and their obligations within it.

Our Supply Chain

The main way of mitigating the risks posed by modern day slavery is to fully understand how, and on what we spend money, and the country of origin for each area of our supply chain. Our main areas of expenditure are currently:

- Recruitment
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Property
- Marketing Analytics
- IT Support Services
- Financial services

Our Risk Assessment identifies that our priorities with respect to Modern Slavery should be in the recruitment of staff and the purchase of PPE; people are the output of the service of recruitment and due to the nature of our service our people have a requirement for PPE.

We directly employ our own recruitment team, ensuring we can audit all aspects of our recruitment function. These recruiters are employed by Helping Hands and have a clear understanding of our zero-tolerance policy to modern day slavery. All employees are paid directly by Helping Hands, have a written contract of employment and are made aware of their statutory rights including sick pay, holiday pay and any other benefits they are entitled to.

For PPE we now work only with UK suppliers so that we can fully audit their premises. As a minimum, compliance to Modern Day Slavery Act 2015 is inherent in our contracts and we seek to work with suppliers to increase our knowledge of our full supply chain so that we can mitigate evolving risks when identified.

A Supplier Code of Conduct has been introduced which sets out our expectations on suppliers to comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Progress and Future Actions

Helping Hands recognises that addressing the risk of modern slavery within our business and the supply chain is an ongoing process and we are committed to continual review to ensure that we uphold the commitments set out in this statement.

As no reports have been received from employees, the public, law enforcement agencies or local safeguarding teams we are confident that the steps we are taking to ensure slavery is not taking place within our business are effective.

This document constitutes our Modern Slavery Statement for the financial year ending 31st December 2024 and has been created in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.