

ASPIRE HOUSING LIMITED

Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement/ Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement

For the year ended 31 March 2016

Introduction

Social responsibility and integrity have been embedded across the organisation since it was incorporated in 2000. We have a long-standing commitment to supporting a diverse culture, where equal opportunity is promoted actively and in which unlawful discrimination is not tolerated.

The new Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires us to provide a statement, outlining our commitment and actions taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our supply chains, or within the organisation.

This is our first statement since the Act was introduced and we are proud to be able to reference several long-standing policies and activities that support the aims of the Act.

However, we will not be complacent and will continue to improve our policies and activities to support our zero-tolerance approach, which to date have ensured we have had no reported incidences of slavery or human trafficking.

Our structure

We are a social regeneration business, providing housing, training and neighbourhood services in the social housing sector. Our mission is to create successful communities, to enhance lives and maximise opportunity.

We have over 400 employees and operate solely in Staffordshire & Cheshire (UK). Our head office is in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire.

During the year ended 31 March 2016 we were organised into several member companies including Aspire Housing, Enterprising Futures (including PM Training & Furniture Mine) and Realise Foundation. Following a governance review which came into effect in July 2016, our current structure is now simpler, though our activities remain the same. For more information on our current structure visit: www.wearespire.org

Our supply chains

Our supply chains are solely based in the UK and include a significant proportion of local suppliers who work closely with us and are managed by individual contract managers. We believe that, given that we operate solely in the UK, within the social housing sector, with simple financial transactions and business partnerships, we have a low risk of exposure to acts of modern slavery.

All current suppliers were made aware of the Modern Slavery Act requirements when they were issued with an updated copy of our revised terms and conditions of purchase in July 2016. These include a condition that they comply with the Act. Terms and conditions are provided to all new suppliers for them to sign prior to any purchases being made.

Our policies

Whilst we do not have a standalone Modern Slavery policy, we believe that our commitment to equality and fairness is the foundation of all of our activities and our policy framework supports the Act's aims to ensure there is no modern slavery in our business or supply chain, including specifically:

- Aspire Group Procurement Strategy (2014-2019), including our supplier Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and supplier Terms & Conditions
- Aspire Group Equality & Diversity Policy
- Aspire Housing Safeguarding Policy
- Aspire Group Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy
- Aspire Group Whistleblowing Policy

For further details of these policies please contact governance@aspirehousing.co.uk.

Training & communication

All new starters are required to read and understand the Corporate Strategy and Equality & Diversity Policy in the first week of employment, alongside completion of an e-training module on Equality. This training supports Aspire's commitment to supporting a diverse culture where equal opportunity is promoted actively and in which unlawful discrimination is not tolerated.

The Safeguarding Policy, launched in April 2015 states that all front-line employees should be trained to Safeguarding Children and Adults Level 1 every three years. Training has been completed for all front-line housing employees and is on-going for other front-line employees.

This statement has been shared with our customer forum and all staff, along with details of resources including Modern Slavery Helpline (0800 0121 7100) and the Stronger Together initiative (www.stronger2gether.org).

Further steps

Following the governance re-structure in July of this year the Corporate Plan has been refreshed. As part of this process, all employees have taken part in values workshops and our new values will be launched, as part of the new Plan, in October 2016. These values will form the foundation of how Aspire conducts business across the organisation. The Plan will be published online at www.weareaspire.org

We are also undertaking a comprehensive policy framework review to reflect the new governance structure. As well as ensuring a simpler, yet robust policy framework for the business, an outcome of this review will be to strengthen reference to legislation, including the Modern Slavery Act, where appropriate.

The induction process is also currently under review, but will continue to include Equality e-learning and references to corporate policies.

The Neighbourhood team will complete Safeguarding Children and Adults Level 1 qualifications for all front-line employees during 2016.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes our slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ended 31 March 2016.

Philippa Holland

Aspire Housing Chair

30 September 2016