

WESTMINSTER ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESAN TRUST

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2024

Introduction

The Westminster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust recognises the grave impact of human trafficking and modern slavery, as described by Pope Francis as 'grievous wounds in the flesh of humanity... in the flesh of Christ himself'. This statement outlines our commitment to address and mitigate the risks of modern slavery comprehensively within our operations and supply chains. As a founding member of the Santa Marta Group, we acknowledge our responsibility to combat this ancient yet persistent criminal activity through the collaborative efforts of our parishes and Caritas Westminster, our social action agency.

Organisational Structure

This statement encompasses the activities of the Diocese of Westminster, governed by the Trustees of the diocese. Our jurisdiction includes the London boroughs north of the River Thames, west of the Lea River, as well as the County of Hertfordshire and the Borough of Spelthorne in Surrey. The Westminster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust (WRCDT) serves the purpose of advancing the Roman Catholic religion within our diocese. With approximately half a million Catholics, 207 parishes, 204 schools, and various social outreach agencies, including Caritas Bakhita House, a refuge for victims of modern slavery, we actively promote social justice, peace, and human rights awareness through the diocesan Justice and Peace Commission.

Actions to Mitigate Risk of Slavery and Human Trafficking

Supply Chain and Risk Assessment

As a charity operating within London and its surrounding areas, we have identified two key areas where WRCDT may be exposed to potential modern slavery risks: our workforce and our supply chains.

To manage the risk associated with our workforce, our managers have received training on identifying and mitigating the risk of slavery and human trafficking, and are expected to evaluate the risk and report regularly as part of their departmental risk assessment. The diocese has adopted internal recruitment procedures and engaged Green Park, a specialist charity recruitment firm in the UK, for difficult-to-fill and highly-specialised or senior roles.

Regarding our supply chains, we are currently focusing on the high-risk area of construction in our property services. On an annual basis, the diocese manages and completes over 500 construction/redecorating projects in its wide estate. The diocese has implemented a training programme in conjunction with Stop the Traffik. This training includes senior managers and project consultants. The training covers case studies, how to spot modern day slavery, and general discussion of the issue. As a result of these discussions, the diocese has redrafted its policies of engagement in construction. Currently, working with Stop the Traffik, the diocese has begun a comprehensive supply chain risk mapping exercise for its construction supply chain. Furthermore, the diocese will include all of its other suppliers in this exercise, but this process is taking longer than originally imagined.

Modern Slavery Policy

The Diocese of Westminster recognised it did not have a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking policy which clearly defined our commitment to this issues. To strengthen our commitment to preventing all forms of modern slavery within our operations, we will develop a dedicated Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy before publishing our 2025 statement.

Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct outlines the expectations and responsibilities of all staff, including employees, volunteers, agency workers, and directly engaged contractors, to maintain professional boundaries and foster an inclusive and non-discriminatory work environment. Supported by individual policies such as anti-bullying and equality and diversity, the Code of Conduct ensures compliance and provides access to support for all employees.

Recruitment and Selection Policy

We are dedicated to attracting, recruiting, and retaining the best individuals for our charity. Our Recruitment and Selection Policy ensures compliance with legal employment requirements in the UK, including conducting right to work checks on all staff categories.

Grievance, Bullying, and Harassment Policy and Procedures

Aligned with our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Statement (EDIS), this policy outlines our commitment to maintaining a respectful and inclusive work environment. It provides clear procedures for reporting and addressing grievances, bullying and harassment, ensuring that all complaints are treated seriously, confidentially and impartially. We encourage open communication and provide support to victims of such behaviour.

Training and Awareness

We understand that raising awareness among our staff and stakeholders is crucial to combating modern slavery and human trafficking. To this end, as mentioned, we provide training on identifying the signs of modern slavery, reporting mechanisms, and relevant legislation. We encourage all employees and volunteers to complete the training, and we integrate this training into our induction process for new staff.

Our own refuge for women who have been victims of modern-day slavery, Bakhita House, provides a beacon for understanding and awareness. Since its opening in 2015, the centre has cared for over 190 women, each carrying her own individual pain and trauma, but working to safely overcome them.

Additionally, we collaborate with external organisations, such as St Mary's University's Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse, the charity Stop the Traffik, the Santa Marta Group, and local law enforcement agencies, to enhance our understanding of the issue and strengthen our efforts in combating modern slavery.

We proactively seek to ensure that our investments are aligned to ending Modern Day slavery. We proactively participate in investment initiative of Find it, Fix it, Prevent it campaign.

Reporting and Whistleblowing

We have established a confidential reporting mechanism that allows employees, volunteers, and stakeholders to report any concerns or suspicions regarding modern slavery and human trafficking. This mechanism ensures that individuals can report such matters without fear of retaliation. Reports are thoroughly investigated, and appropriate actions are taken in response.

Supplier Due Diligence

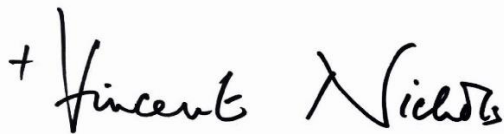
We are committed to working with suppliers who share our values and commitment to human rights. We conduct due diligence on our high-risk suppliers, including reviewing their policies, procedures, and practices related to modern slavery and human trafficking. We encourage suppliers to adhere to internationally-recognised standards, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Continual Improvement

We acknowledge that addressing modern slavery and human trafficking is an ongoing effort. As mentioned, we regularly review and evaluate our policies, procedures and practices to identify areas for improvement. We do this by engaging with stakeholders, participating in industry forums, and staying updated on legislative changes and best practices in combating modern slavery.

Conclusion

The Diocese of Westminster is committed to combatting modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms. We recognise the importance of robust policies, training, and collaborative efforts with our stakeholders to address this issue effectively. Through our endeavours, we aim to contribute to the eradication of modern slavery and the protection of human rights within our organisation and supply chains. We will continue to strengthen our efforts and regularly report on our progress in future statements.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vincent Nichols" with a small cross symbol to the left of the first name.

Approved by H.E. Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Chair of the Directors of the Trustee
5 July 2024