

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2021

Introduction

The following statement is published in accordance with section 54(1) part 6 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It is intended to communicate the activities undertaken during the financial year ended 31 July 2021, and the objectives for the financial year ending 31 July 2022 in our continued efforts to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our supply chain.

Organisational structure

Birkbeck is a unique institution providing access to degree education for working Londoners through the provision of teaching in the evening. As a consequence, most of our students are mature and have jobs, caring or other responsibilities during the day. The fact that we are different from the majority of higher education providers in the UK (who mostly teach young undergraduates during the day) often means that Government policy and other external factors have a different, and often unexpected, influence on Birkbeck. Based in the heart of Bloomsbury, we are a leading research university and a vibrant learning community offering over 200 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Academic activities are organised into five schools which are subdivided into nineteen departments, supported by various central services.

Founded in 1823 by the philanthropist Dr George Birkbeck, the College is a body incorporated by Royal Charter and an exempt charity under the terms of the Charities Act 2011. Under the Charities Act, universities are overseen by the Office for Students as principal regulator with the responsibility for ensuring that universities fulfil their obligations under Charity Law.

During the year the College reported annual turnover of £118.6 million, other operating expenditure (including agency and contract staff costs but excluding staff costs) of £27.4 million and employed 1,185 full time equivalent staff. The College wholly owns one subsidiary called Birkbeck College (Cambridge House) Limited.

Our mission

The principal aims of Birkbeck are to:

- provide flexible and part-time higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of students of all ages: in particular, those who live or work in the London region
- enable mature students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses
- make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate

- maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas.

Our commitment

Our workplace policies and procedures demonstrate our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all of our business relationships. We continue to implement and enforce effective systems and controls and use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in our supply chain.

A range of policies and procedures set out our commitment to workplace rights and ensure that our employees are treated fairly with dignity and respect. These policies, which are reviewed regularly, include, but are not limited to:

- [Equality and Diversity](#) - sets out the College's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the various ways in which we meet our duties
- [Gender Pay Gap Report](#) - looks at pay disparity across the organisation
- [Dignity at Work and Study](#) - is intended to support our provision of an inclusive working and learning environment
- [Formal Grievance](#) and [Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure \("Whistleblowing"\)](#) - enables staff to report improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- [Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy](#) - sets out our responsibilities and position on bribery and corruption.

Our Human Resources department provide advice to staff and ensure our people policies and procedures, including those related to recruitment of staff, are consistently applied across the institution.

We use the national single pay spine structure which is operated by most higher education institutions in the UK. We are accredited as a London Living Wage employer (since 2015) and are committed to paying staff the London Living Wage.

To identify possible inconsistencies between policy and practice we undertake institution-wide staff surveys. These include questions about the experiences of staff in relation to instances of bullying/harassment/discrimination and the ability to manage work-life issues as employees of the College. The results are compared against past surveys and sector benchmarks. Action plans are developed to make improvements where required. The survey results, analysis and actions are included in the institutional Athena SWAN submission.

Staff whose primary job function is procurement are either qualified Members of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS) or will be actively working towards the qualification.

Our supply chains

We are committed to protecting and respecting human rights through continuous improvement of purchasing practices. The Procurement Team is committed to tackling modern slavery within our procurement, contract management and supply chain management operations.

While the majority of our suppliers are based in the UK, we do also purchase goods and services from abroad.

Our complex and diverse supply chains support our teaching and research functions, they fall broadly into the following categories:

- Estates development and infrastructure
- Professional services
- Laboratory supplies
- IT and telecoms
- Library services
- Utilities
- Travel
- Janitorial and security provisions
- Catering services and supplies
- Furniture
- Office supplies & print services

We use purchasing consortiums wherever possible. These include the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC), Crown Commercial Services (CCS), The University Caterers Organisation (TUCO) and the NHS Shared Business Services framework. This allows us to make use of consortia negotiated contracts. Our membership to the LUPC also gives us access to countrywide frameworks. The LUPC is committed to supporting international human rights standards, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the UK Government's National Action Plan to implement the UNGPs.

Our progress

During the year we continued using our supplier registration form which requires compliance with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act for companies with a turnover of £36 million and over. We also continued to review anti-slavery statements as part of our tender evaluation and new supplier registration processes. Our standard terms and conditions continue to be updated regularly and have a section on compliance with Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Laws and Policies. In addition:

- staff involved in sourcing and tendering activities during 2020/2021 were encouraged to complete the British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) e-learning courses on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain. Completion of these courses is an important part of raising awareness for individuals and teams involved in these processes
- suppliers tendering for a major estates infrastructure contracts carried out under public procurement regulations were invited to submit bids which included a section on social

value and sustainable development. These were evaluated against published award criteria.

- we circulated our modern slavery questionnaire template to a broader range of suppliers in Building Management Services, Healthcare, IT, Online Academic Services and Utility categories. Suppliers actively engaged with this and in addition provided information about how they proactively mitigate risk of Slavery and Human Trafficking within their supply chains.
- the Procurement Team completed refresher training on Ethical Procurement provided by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) to maintain their knowledge of the subject.

Our plans for the future

In the coming year we will continue our work in combatting slavery and human trafficking in our supply chain. We will monitor our supply chains and apply all due diligence in a spirit of openness and transparency with our supplier partners to reduce that risk.

In addition to ensuring our modern slavery statement is prominently displayed on our website along with previous statements our key objectives for the coming year will be to:

- continue raising awareness by encouraging more staff to complete the BUFDG e-learning courses on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain. Staff involved in regulated tender processes will also be asked to complete the CIPS Ethical procurement test.
- form a working group of academic and non-academic staff whose principal aims will be to make recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee and raise awareness of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking across the organisation.
- extend the modern slavery questionnaire to suppliers in higher risk categories whose turnover is below the £36 million turnover threshold.
- work closely with LUPC's dedicated responsible procurement lead to develop a responsible procurement strategy with the overarching objective of providing a transparent and fair procurement service that promotes value for money and adopts best practice.
- carry out a review of all of our suppliers using the Higher Education Procurement Association (HEPA) commodity coding risk analysis. We will engage those suppliers with a high-risk indicator to complete a mapping exercise so we can better understand their supply chain and how they manage the risk of modern slavery within their supply chain.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. G.' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Sir Andrew Cahn
Chair of Governors
For and on behalf of Birkbeck, University of London

November 2021