

## **Bernicia's Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement September 2018**

This statement is made pursuant to Part 6 Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

In the last 12 months –

- We have raised awareness about Modern Slavery by:
  - Continuing to publish our slavery and human trafficking statement externally.
  - Produced a leaflet for tenants, entitled “Stop Abuse” which refers to Modern Slavery and lists the action that people can take if they suspect it is taking place or that they are a victim.
  - Produced an article in the tenants’ newsletter informing tenants how to detect the signs of Modern Slavery and the action they can take if they suspect it is taking place.
- The Procurement Officer has completed an update of the e-learning course- Ethical Procurement and Supply (2018 / 2019).
- We have continued to include selection criteria in tenders which include the use of the Crown Commercial Service’s standard pre-qualification questionnaire and PAS91 for construction procurement, which target questions of slavery and human trafficking risks.
- We have finalised the implementation of changes to procurement documents to include reference to modern slavery and human trafficking including procurement policy, terms and conditions and code of practice for contractors.
- We have communicated Bernicia’s standards to our contractors, stakeholders and suppliers, who will be expected to maintain the same standards. As part of this we now request all existing and new suppliers and contractors to sign a statutory declaration conveying their understanding of the organisations approach to modern slavery in the supply chain.
- We have continued to hold information on suppliers, contractors and consultant’s equal opportunity and diversity policies and statements.
- We have continued to ensure our staff have an understanding of the potential risks of modern slavery and human trafficking in delivering our services via equality and diversity and safeguarding training which includes making staff aware of the modern slavery act 2015 which includes definitions of slavery and human trafficking and via safeguarding policies and procedures.

- We have continued when recruiting new staff to ensure that all prospective employees are legally entitled to work in the UK via sight of an original document confirming this right prior to an offer of employment being made. A copy of the document or a detailed record of it is retained on file. The Human Resources GDPR information asset register and recruitment guidance has been up-dated to include a statement as to why the information is collected.
- We have continued to sign up new tenants using the following precautionary measures:
  - It is a condition of the tenancy agreement that tenanted' properties remain occupied by the legal tenant and are not used for "criminal, illegal or immoral activity", including slavery. Bernicia's Housing Management monitor and make sure occupancy is by the stated legal tenant and there are checks in place to ensure they have the right to take the tenancy.
  - Photographs of new tenants are taken or obtained from the tenant so that identification can be confirmed at any time during the tenancy.
  - Unannounced or arranged calls are made at the commencement of new tenancies (after the first arranged visit) to ensure the right person is in the property.
  - Via safeguarding training housing staff are made aware of the signs of criminal activity, including modern slavery so that if necessary, action can be taken.
- We have contacted our current suppliers who provide us with temporary staff to ensure they also comply with the modern slavery act.
- We have continued to review internal policies where reference to the modern slavery act is required.
- We have implemented procedures for non-compliance with the act by tenants under the terms of their tenancy agreement.

## **Bernicia Group**

We are a significant regional business that owns 14,000 properties and are developing new homes across a range of property types and tenures. We provide housing services for single people, couples, families, and older people and care and support for those with additional support requirements. Whilst predominantly a social landlord, we have successful trading subsidiaries that provide high quality block and facilities management. Our commercial subsidiaries gift aid their surplus back to Bernicia, which is used to increase the social value we are able to deliver. As a group we build, rent, sell and manage homes, provide estate and facilities management and specialist care and support services to over 60,000 customers. We will be investing £140 million in new and existing homes in the forthcoming years.

Underpinning everything we do is our vision, mission and values.

**Vision** – Housing People, Helping People:

We believe a good home makes lots of other things possible, so we provide great homes and services that do just that. We are “housing people” – professional and passionate about what we do.

**Mission** – Investing in homes, services and people to make a positive impact on the communities of the North East:

We will invest to provide quality new and existing homes, in the provision of services that respond to our tenants, customers and market place requirements, and in our people and the communities within which we operate. **We will invest in the North East.**

**Our Values** – The Bernicia Way:

We value our customers, work together, respect each other and have the highest levels of accountability and integrity. We deliver what we say we will do, something that our tenants, customers and partners can rely upon.

# Our Values



## Customer Focused

Because we care about our customers, how we do things is as important to us as what we do. We understand our customers and deliver great customer service



## Teamwork

We work together, across boundaries, to meet the needs of our customers and help the organisation to be successful.



## Integrity

We uphold the highest standards of integrity in all of our actions.



## Respect for our People

We value our people, encourage their development and reward their performance.



## Leadership

We provide strong corporate governance and leadership which is outcome-focused.



## Accountability

We are personally accountable for delivering on our commitments.

## **Modern Slavery Act 2015**

The modern slavery act 2015 aligns with Bernicia's integrity value on building trust through open, honest, ethical behaviour, acting with respect for others, behaving as responsible members of local communities.

Bernicia does not wish to support or deal with any business knowingly involved in slavery or human trafficking in any part of its operations.

Bernicia is committed to working with partners, contractors, suppliers and other stakeholders to understand the risks to the supply chain and implement systems and processes to ensure slavery and human trafficking is not taking place anywhere in our supply chains.

Bernicia manage procurements from a wide range of partners, suppliers and contractors via a varied supply chain including construction, repairs and maintenance, facilities management, building materials, office supplies, I.T services, recruitment, professional services, utilities, catering and cleaning.

Bernicia is aware that modern slavery and human trafficking is at risk throughout the supply chain and high risks for Bernicia which may exist are suppliers and service providers of repair and maintenance, recruitment agencies and construction contractors.

Over the next 12 months, to gain a further understanding of high risk areas, provide more clarity in our processes and mitigate risks, Bernicia will endeavor to take positive action and undertake the following:

- Finalise the review of our existing supplier and contractor list to include an evaluation of their compliance with the modern slavery act.
- Write to suppliers and contractors in potentially higher risk categories to check what assurance arrangements they have in place.
- Implement procedure and process for non-compliance of the act.
- Communicate to, residents and leaseholders to make them aware of the modern slavery act 2015, including the definitions of slavery and human trafficking.
  - Residents will be made aware of the modern slavery act via articles on our Website and in resident newsletters.
  - Leaseholders will be made aware by inclusion of information in guides, service charge invoices and statements, annual reports, newsletters and on our website.

- Continue to review other internal policies where reference to the modern slavery act is required e.g. housing policies and safeguarding.
- Procurement officer to complete an update of the e-learning course - ethical procurement and supply (Review every 12 months).
- We are looking to increase our staff understandings of the potential risks of modern slavery and human trafficking via our equality and diversity and safeguarding training.
- Monitor progress on actions taken during the year via the Equality and Diversity Panel.

The Executive Director of Resources will take lead responsibility for the development and implementation of anti-slavery initiatives.

This statement has been approved by the Bernicia Board and will be reviewed and updated annually.