



Lincolnshire Co-op

Modern Slavery Statement 2024

1. Our Purpose

Lincolnshire Co-operative has always been proud of its ethical and responsible approach to business, operating in a helpful, inspiring and trustworthy way in the communities we serve. We take a proactive approach to managing and mitigating the risks arising from modern slavery.

Our Modern Slavery Statement for 2024 is made pursuant to section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (“**MSA 2015**”) and sets out the steps we have taken to ensure that modern slavery is not taking place within our business or supply chain. This Statement shows how we have continued to develop our approach in this area over the past year.

2. Our Business

We are an independent co-operative business based in Lincoln with over 270,000 members. The Society has over 220 outlets with its principal trading activity being its food stores, funeral homes, florist and crematorium, travel agencies, post offices and pharmacies. We trade predominantly throughout Lincolnshire, with sites in Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire.

3. Our Suppliers

At Lincolnshire Co-operative, approximately 90% of products sold within our food business are supplied by the Co-operative Group under the terms of a buying service agreement managed by Federal Retail & Trading Services Ltd (“**FRTS**”), which purchases on behalf of our food business.

FRTS has its own Modern Slavery Statement & Sound Sourcing Code of Conduct which can be viewed at www.co-operative.coop/ethics. FRTS is a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative, whose vision is a world where all workers are free from discrimination and exploitation. As a result, we are confident that the Co-operative Group has taken and continues to take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of modern slavery within its operations and supply chain.

As a business we seek to support our local suppliers by selling their products in our stores, and as we source their products directly from them, we work with them to ensure that their operations are free from any aspects of modern slavery. We carry out due-diligence checks in relation to modern slavery for each potential new supplier or contractor prior to engaging with them as a business to ensure compliance with the Society’s standards around modern slavery.

All prospective local suppliers to our food business have an audit carried out by our Buying Team which covers modern slavery to ensure compliance with relevant standards. Once accepted, suppliers are asked to complete our bespoke i-Learn module on modern slavery to increase their knowledge and awareness in this area.

We maintain an approved contractor list for construction works and services and only companies held on this list are used. We ask these companies to also complete our bespoke i-Learn module on modern slavery, to ensure our standards as a business are maintained and to raise awareness within the contractor’s own operations. It is also a requirement of our Standard Purchasing Contract that they confirm compliance with the MSA 2015.

4. Our Policies and Procedures

At Lincolnshire Co-operative we maintain policies and procedures to mitigate the risk of any person being exploited within our business. These include:

- A robust recruitment policy, including eligibility to work in the UK checks for all potential colleagues, to safeguard against Human Trafficking or persons being forced to work against their will.
- A Whistleblowing Policy to allow concerns to be raised in complete anonymity by anyone without fear of reprisal.
- A Modern Slavery Policy and Human Rights Policy to help underpin this Statement.

As well as having in place internal and external whistleblowing reporting channels, our colleagues can also report any suspicions or concerns that they may have internally to our Security Team via the Society's intranet, to allow for any further investigation if appropriate at a business-level.

5. Training and Awareness

Our colleagues undertake modern slavery training at least every other year. Colleagues with specific responsibilities in relation to modern slavery prevention also undertake additional enhanced training sourced from external providers as appropriate. We have extended the provision of modern slavery training to all of the Society's commercial tenants and suppliers, which is accessed through the Society's on-line training portal – this training has been updated this year to reflect the developments in Modern Slavery criminal practices taking place in the UK, particularly the increasing use of children to facilitate Modern Slavery. A quarterly newsletter has been launched for our suppliers and contractors to provide more consistent awareness on emerging trends around Modern Slavery.

We have maintained our relationship with Lincolnshire Police, engaging with their Modern Slavery Offices regularly to keep updated on instances of modern slavery in our area. This year, we helped promote awareness of the County Lines aspect of modern slavery. This was jointly supported by the Children's Society as part of their [#Lookcloser](#) campaign. County Lines operations criminally exploit children, some as young as 10 years old, forcing them through threats, intimidation and usually debt bondage, to courier drugs or cash to areas such as market or coastal towns. The gangs organizing this activity target children for this purpose as they are less likely to attract any suspicion from enforcement authorities. We subsequently met with both the Police and the Children's Society and supported this campaign through a series of in-store radio announcements in our Food premises, with four messages broadcast each day in each premises for a week, to help increase awareness of this to our customers.

We also recognised Anti-Slavery Day on the 18 October within our business, circulating appropriate information to all colleagues via our internal communication channels.

6. Monitoring and Effectiveness

We know the steps we are taking in relation to modern slavery are effective by monitoring:

- The number of incidents or reports received from our colleagues, the public or law enforcement agencies.
- The number of our colleagues, suppliers and tenants who have completed our modern slavery i-learn module.
- The maintenance of regular contact with law enforcement agencies by those colleagues with specific responsibilities for the prevention of modern slavery.

7. Approval of this Statement

This Statement was approved by the Board of Directors on 11 November 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Cowell".

David Cowell
Chair of the Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison Hands".

Alison Hands
Chief Executive Officer