

Case Study Modern Slavery

United
Supply
Chain



 **United
Utilities**
Water for the North West



Overview

United Utilities is committed to raising awareness of modern slavery, improving our processes and mitigating risk. We continue to ensure our people are sufficiently trained in understanding modern slavery – we've retained the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Corporate Ethics Mark in 2020 for the third consecutive year, and as partners to the Supply Chain Sustainability School, we're building a culture of best practice. United Supply Chain will provide suppliers with resources and forums to share best practice to develop their own capability.

Approach

We've taken a proactive approach to tackling modern slavery and have robust processes in place to identify and mitigate risk. However, we recognise that it's important to benchmark our performance and, in 2019/20, we engaged the University of Liverpool to carry out an independent review of our approach to tackling modern slavery. As a result of this exercise, we've enhanced our procurement and contact management processes to embed mitigation of modern slavery risk in all supplier relationships.

Following training in the commercial team on how to recognise and mitigate modern slavery risk in the supply chain, we're also taking part in the BSI Committee on Modern Slavery, which is investigating ways in which approaches can be standardised across businesses and supply chains. This has also encouraged collaboration with other water companies and infrastructure providers to maximise efforts to tackle modern slavery across the sector.

As part of our enhancement programme and to increase awareness of this important issue across our whole organisation, our latest awareness week was focused on the topic of modern slavery and coincided with UK Anti-Slavery Day (18 October 2019). Our employees were really engaged on this issue and it prompted many discussions as to how our colleagues can help to tackle the issue, both in and outside of work.

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Results

The Benchmarking exercise confirmed that our existing reporting and processes in place are appropriate – something we’re really proud of – and our enhancements have succeeded in raising the profile of the topic across the whole organisation.

Over the course of the week we carried out a number of different activities to raise awareness. This included:

- Publishing a daily blog to inform colleagues how modern slavery is relevant to them as individuals and our business.
- Providing information to help colleagues spot signs of modern slavery.
- Informing staff on what to do if they suspect there are signs of modern slavery, and how to respond and report the issue.

The week culminated with a hard-hitting presentation to procurement professionals and other senior leaders across the business from representatives of the Sophie Hayes Foundation – a charity set up to help women who have been through the ordeal of human trafficking, including survivors of modern slavery.

Hearing Directly from survivors of trafficking really brought the issue home, and following this a number of employees have volunteered to help the charity.



Pictured, left to right: Martin Gee (Commercial Director, United Utilities) pictured with Red Godfrey Sagoo (CEO, Sophie Hayes Foundation) and Simon Gardiner (General Counsel & Company Secretary, United Utilities)

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Outcome

This last year our commercial department has taken the lead on modern slavery and identified new ways of working to help raise awareness. We're keen to push forward with collaborating on improvements throughout our supply chain and in local communities within the North West.

Over the next AMP we're endeavouring to take our current approach one step further by engaging with our supply chain and leading on this hard-hitting topic. Our key aims are to:

- Continually raise awareness by making our Anti-Slavery Day an annual event
- Develop training for our employees (both customer-facing and office roles) to help tackle any issues that may arise
- Engage with the BSI Committee to establish a standardised across all business in relation to modern slavery
- Establish a collaborative approach with our supply chain to mitigate any potential risk areas

Through our Responsible Sourcing Principles and the USC approach, we ask that our supply chain engages with us to mitigate risks and we actively encourage suppliers to share best practice and raise awareness throughout the supply chain. Suppliers are encouraged to use the resources available through USC to increase their own knowledge and awareness of this issue.

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Read more

- Find out more about [Sophie Hayes Foundation](#)
- Read our Annual [Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement](#)