

## BCC urges organisations across the sector to act to help stamp out modern slavery

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The British Cleaning Council (BCC) has urged its member associations and organisations across the cleaning, hygiene and FM sector to take action on modern slavery.

Modern slavery occurs where someone is forced into working in conditions where they are exploited and their rights are breached, often involving trafficking, coercion or sexual exploitation.

While all businesses must beware of using staff who are victims of modern slavery, whether in a company itself or in its supply chain, the risks are much higher in labour intensive service providers such as cleaning and facilities management, along with security, care industry and hospitality.

In addition to the penalties imposed on service providers, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA 2015) exposes clients to investigation and possible prosecution.

Uniquely, the MSA 2015 creates vicarious liability between a company and those companies and entities which it has engaged to carry out services; a sub-contractor guilty of offences creates civil and criminal liability to all companies who have been provided service by that company.

Under the MSA 2015, commercial organizations with a turnover of over £36 million are also liable for preparing an annual slavery and human trafficking statement.

The BCC is strongly encouraging sector organisations to make themselves aware of the relevant legislation, and to take steps to identify and mitigate the risk of exploitation both within their organisation and within their supply chain.

BCC Chair David Garcia said: “Modern slavery cases are rising in the UK and behind the statistics, there is terrible human suffering.

“All businesses in our industry need to be aware that if a sub-contractor or a supplier is using staff who are victims of modern slavery, or someone in the company is exploiting workers without the knowledge of the managers or director, not knowing about it isn’t good enough. They are also liable.

“This is not just about meeting your legal obligations, it is about showing that the industry as a whole and individual businesses are committed to human rights, sustainability, and operating responsibly.”

The Stamp Out Slavery (SOS) initiative offers companies complementary guidance on self-reviewing their risks and can also conduct independent reviews at a modest cost, providing a quality mark and assurance to prospective clients that all reasonable measures have been implemented to mitigate the risk of exploitation.

In the unlikely event of an investigation by the police or UK Border Force, evidence of awareness and response to modern slavery threats, whether externally or internally created, would be a critical element in determining whether a company had taken all possible steps.

For more information about their services, please contact SOS via the contact form on its website [www.stampoutslavery.org/contact](http://www.stampoutslavery.org/contact)