



1.0 Optivo Modern Slavery Statement 2017/18

- 1.1 This statement sets out Optivo's commitment to comply with the principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA).
- 1.2 In it we outline the steps we have taken over the past twelve months to further understand the risks and what we have done to mitigate them thereby preventing potential incidences of modern slavery and human trafficking in our business activities and within our supply chain. We have also been keen to safeguard those living in our homes and communities.

2.0 Who are Optivo and what do we do?

- 2.1 Formed in May 2017, Optivo is a major 44,000 home registered provider of social housing with a turnover in excess of £300 million. Operating across London and the South-East as well as East and West Midlands, we are a not-for-profit, value driven, service-based organisation. The majority of our stock is general needs family housing but also includes supported housing, retirement housing, hostels, student accommodation and homes for key workers as well as homes for shared owners. Our staff and contractors are in and out of our homes all the time and as such, are our eyes and ears on the ground.

3.0 Executive Responsibility

- 3.1 Responsibility for compliance with the MSA rests at the highest level with our Board, delegated to the Executive Director of People and Communications (HR), Chief Financial Officer (Procurement), and the Chief Operating Officer (Housing Management and Safeguarding). Operationally, our Partnership Development Manager who is a member of the Optivo Safeguarding Monitoring Group and who sits with our Procurement Team, leads on this discipline.

4.0 What have we done in Financial Year 2017/18?

- 4.1 As a newly merged organisation, our focus is firmly on integrating our key data, systems and processes. But we have not lost sight of this important issue as it is forms a key component of our CORE Values.
- 4.2 **Our People:** We have a dedicated Human Resources team who have created robust and inclusive selection, recruitment and induction processes for our newly merged company. And Optivo's terms and conditions of employment are generous with any changes made with the full involvement of our staff Partnership Forum. We have invested heavily in our people and our service

culture, making sure we provide resources to train and develop everyone's potential.

- 4.3 **Our Residents:** We are doing all we can to protect our residents (See Para 4.4 below) but we recognise we can do more in the future to raise their awareness of Modern Slavery. If we enlist their support in reporting concerns we could potentially have another 90,000 eyes and ears on the ground. We are starting by uploading informative video clips to our website and will do more communications during 2018/17.
- 4.4 **Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Young People and Children:** Operating across London, which we know is a hub for modern slavery in Britain, especially women, we have asked everyone to be vigilant. Across London women are being coerced into sexual enslavement, domestic servitude and forced labour. A recent report by Hestia, a charity working to help victims of slavery, says there are high concentrations in Southwark, Croydon, Lewisham, Newham and Barking and Dagenham. Believing in the power of our people, we have continued to raise awareness, briefing all Optivo staff and contractors on how to recognise the signs and symptoms of Modern Slavery as part of our work around Safeguarding. We monitor all Safeguarding incidents and alerts, including any of those reported to us by our contractors. There have been no Modern Slavery alerts over the past twelve months. That said, we know it is prevalent in our areas and we remain vigilant.
- 4.5 **Growing our Understanding:** We have attended seminars run by Stronger Together to improve our own knowledge and we have identified those businesses, and our suppliers, who are the most "at risk" of knowingly or unknowingly committing the crime.
- 4.6 **Our Supply Chain:** Our supply chain consists of works, services and goods with the highest risk areas being associated with our development and maintenance activities. We do source components from outside of the UK and we recognise how the complex crime of modern slavery can infiltrate even the most careful businesses.
- 4.7 **Managing our Approved List:** Optivo currently has an approved list of approximately 1500 contractors and suppliers (a number set to reduce over time as we complete our integration). And our purchase order payment system requires the use of pre-approved suppliers. Through our approved list we require any contractor or supplier who works for us to commit to our Modern Slavery Code of Conduct and undertake their own due-diligence on their supply chains and recruitment practices to further limit the risk. We ask them to carry out annual Safeguarding refreshers using Optivo training material. This also forms part of our new Employers' Requirements for new build developments too.
- 4.8 **Raising Contractor/Supplier Awareness:** During our first year of operation as Optivo, we have contacted all our suppliers to raise awareness of the crime of Modern Slavery and to get them thinking about how it may infiltrate and impact on their business.
- 4.9 **Tackling Modern Slavery Collaboration Project:** We invited all those in the "at risk" categories to participate in a "Learn Together" project based on our shared experience of tackling these crimes. This group started to meet in December

and currently has representation from six companies working in commercial cleaning and estate maintenance, kitchen installation and external decoration. We have met once and everyone found it useful to share knowledge and resources around recruitment practices. We plan to meet again in April 2018.

- 4.10 **Procurement and Contract Management:** We have a dedicated Procurement Team who have worked with our staff teams to design a Contract Management Framework for Optivo. Our Contract and Accounts Managers are briefed on Modern Slavery and continually monitor the level of management control required across our business.