NFER
National Foundation for Educational Research

NFER Modern Slavery Statement

April 2026

Introduction

NFER acknowledges that under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, it is not required to produce an annual modern slavery statement but does so in recognition of its responsibilities in taking a robust approach against slavery and human trafficking.

This statement sets out the steps that NFER has taken and is continuing to take to ensure modern slavery or human trafficking is not taking place within our business or supply chain.

We are committed to the highest levels of quality and service and to being a trusted supplier, partner and advisor. NFER is, therefore, working to ensure we have effective systems and controls in place to safeguard against any form of modern slavery within the business or our supply chain.

What is Modern Slavery?

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA) was introduced by the UK government as a way of tackling modern slavery in this country and to lead the way internationally in cracking down on this crime.

UK businesses are seen to have a role to play in tackling modern slavery, and the legislation ensures that they must not knowingly or unknowingly be complicit in this type of crime.

The production of an annual modern slavery statement allows organisations to demonstrate what action they have taken to prevent modern slavery within their businesses and supply chains. They are encouraged to go beyond their legal obligations and recognise they have a social responsibility also, which in turn benefits their business. Those benefits include:

- Staff retention and loyalty
- Stakeholder confidence
- Stronger and stable supply chains
- Protecting customers
- Supporting and protecting reputation and brand.

Definition of Modern Slavery

The charity Anti-Slavery International defines modern slavery as being when an individual is exploited by others, for personal or commercial gain.

Whether tricked, coerced, or forced, they lose their freedom. This includes but is not limited to human trafficking, forced labour and debt bondage.

Forms of Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is a broad term for a range of exploitation types, including:

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Debt bondage/bonded labour
- Child slavery
- Forced and early marriage
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation

Our Organisation

NFER is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity. Our mission is to generate evidence and insights that can be used to improve outcomes for future generations everywhere, and to support positive change across education systems.

Our long history, vast experience and pioneering methods have established our reputation as an authoritative, trusted and respected voice in education. Today, that reputation is enhanced with an unmatched depth and breadth of specialist education knowledge, talent and methodological expertise.

We use our expertise to produce high-quality, independent research and insights to inform key decision-makers about issues across the education system, including:

- Accountability
- Assessment
- Classroom Practice
- Education to Employment
- Social Mobility
- School Funding
- School Workforce
- Systems and Structures

Our clients include government departments and agencies at international, national and local levels, third-sector organisations, private and public companies, employers, and other organisations with an interest in education. They all benefit from the full range of our expert and professional services.

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, we invest any surplus funds directly back into our programme of research to address key questions in education – delivering new knowledge to help build better futures and to increase our impact and support for policymakers and practitioners.

NFER has a permanent workforce of around 200 employees, including over 80 researchers and 40 specialist colleagues in research and product operations. Most of our people work in a hybrid way, with teams primarily based at our head office in Slough.

We also engage over 1,000 associates and temporary workers, who provide professional expertise to our teams and support the delivery of our assessment services.

NFER works in the UK and internationally.

Our growing international portfolio of work continues to add to the breadth and depth of our education experience. We provide research and assessment services wherever they are needed, including recent work in Australia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Our Values

Collaborative, Can before Can't, Outcome focused and Acting with integrity.

Our values support and guide our work and shape our culture. They enable NFER to hold itself accountable, focus on what is most important, and recognise our social responsibility.

Our Policies

We are committed to carrying out our work in an ethical and lawful way, which is underpinned by integrity and professionalism. NFER understands its responsibilities toward safeguarding and is committed to ensuring there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in the Foundation or in our supply chains.

Our values, policies and procedures demonstrate our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business relationships and help govern our approach to safeguarding, human rights and modern slavery. They also provide systems and controls to minimise the risk of modern slavery in our business and wider supply chain.

We operate the following policies:

Safeguarding Policy and Standards

The purpose of this policy is to protect all our research participants and those associated with it, particularly children, young people and at-risk adults, from any harm that may be caused by coming into contact with us, whether in the UK or internationally.

Whistleblowing Policy

We encourage our workforce to report any concerns related to NFER activities or our supply chain. Our whistleblowing procedure is designed to make it easy to make disclosures without fear of retaliation.

Personal Security Checks Policy

All our staff and workers are required to undertake pre-employment screening checks and ongoing security checks under the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is to maintain the safety and security of children when our staff undertake activities within schools, to maintain NFER's integrity, safety and security, as well as to guard against the employment of anyone posing as a prospective employee for commercial or personal gain. This policy also covers the requirement for employment references to be provided.

Anti-Bribery & Corruption Policy

Our policy sets out to provide guidance on what is and what is not acceptable and what constitutes bribery and corruption, and it sets standards to prevent any such cases throughout the Foundation.

Code of Practice

This sets out the principles and practices that affect the assessment, evaluation, information, research, delivery, and product development work carried out by NFER in the UK and internationally. It is issued to all staff, associates, temporary workers and subcontractors to ensure they operate within NFER guidelines.

Research Governance Framework

The framework is a set of policies, procedures and standards of good practice through which NFER ensures the integrity and quality of our research. It sets out who is accountable for the decisions NFER makes and the actions we take that affect our research integrity and quality.

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Provides a route for complaints to be brought to NFER where someone may not be happy with how the Foundation has conducted its business or where they feel NFER has fallen short of the level of service they would expect.

Code of Conduct

The code outlines the minimum standard of behaviour NFER expects from its associate workforce. More than one version of the code is available, depending on the work the associate worker undertakes.

Child Protection Protocol

The protocol provides guidance to all staff who come into direct contact with children and/or deal with their data. It informs staff of what steps to take should safeguarding concerns arise from our work and how to report them. It also details clearly our Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

Working with Schools Policy

The policy sets out how NFER approaches working with schools. It outlines how we communicate and interact with them, conduct our research in schools and manage confidential information, and provides ethical guidelines and rules for data protection.

Due Diligence and Risk Assessment

We regularly review the risks our supply chain can present, and whilst we consider our exposure to modern slavery to be extremely low and unlikely, we expect our suppliers and contractors to have a zero-tolerance approach to exploitation.

To this end, our due diligence and reviews include:

- The expectation that all those in our supply chain and our contractors have values similar to NFER.
- Modern slavery contract clauses are within our terms and conditions for our supplier contracts.
- Where appropriate, working with an external provider to support the procurement and evaluation process of new UK suppliers.
- Adherence to our international procurement policy and evaluation process for all overseas suppliers.

While NFER is comfortable that its approach to due diligence, its assessment of risk and its processes ensure slavery and/or human trafficking is not taking place within the organisation or supply chain, we will continually look for ways to strengthen our approach.

Measurement

In measuring our effectiveness, NFER is committed to regularly reviewing all policies. We are continuing to work on the development of our due diligence processes and reporting to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking from taking place in our business and supply chains.

Statement Approval

This statement was approved on 1 April 2026 by **Carole Willis, NFER, Chief Executive Officer.**