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# The Medical Defence Union modern slavery statement

We are committed to upholding the highest ethical standards and responsible business practices. Preventing modern slavery and human trafficking is a responsibility we take seriously and we expect the same commitment from our partners.

Through clear policies, due diligence and ongoing oversight, we ensure these standards are maintained across our operations and supply chains.

**Dr Matthew Lee**  
Chief Executive Officer

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## Introduction

Since our founding in 1885 as the world's first medical defence organisation, the Medical Defence Union has remained dedicated to supporting our medical and dental members through every challenge—from regulatory proceedings to claims of clinical negligence. We are proud of our rich history of guiding, supporting and defending our members. As a mutual, not-for-profit organisation owned by our members, we uphold the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct.

We are fully committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking, not only within our own operations but also throughout our supply chain and wider network of partners. In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which requires certain commercial organisations in the United Kingdom to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement, this document outlines the proactive steps we have taken during the financial year 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024.

We recognise that modern slavery can take many forms—from human trafficking and forced labour to servitude and exploitation—and often exists hidden beneath the surface. With ongoing vigilance, we continuously review and strengthen our practices to uphold human dignity and ensure ethical operations within our organisation and across our networks. This statement outlines our current approach and the actions we are taking—and will continue to take—to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.

## Our structure

The Medical Defence Union Limited (MDU) is a not-for-profit mutual company limited by guarantee. As a member-owned organisation, we provide discretionary indemnity, medico-legal and dento-legal services. We also represent our members' interests by engaging with government and other stakeholders on matters related to healthcare law and regulation, advocating for fairness and equity.

The operational activities of the MDU, including membership administration, are managed by MDU Services Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the MDU.

## Policies and procedures

We take a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and human trafficking, both within our operations and across our supply chains. We are committed to the highest ethical standards in all business dealings. To manage and mitigate modern slavery risks, we have implemented several key policies and procedures:

- **Anti-slavery and human trafficking policy** – Outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for identifying, preventing and reporting modern slavery within our operations and supply chains, including staff training, compliance monitoring and partner engagement.
- **Procurement policy** – Governs the procurement process, from identifying needs to managing supplier contracts, ensuring that all suppliers meet our ethical standards.
- **Outsourcing policy** – Ensures we maintain oversight and accountability for outsourcing relationships, with full responsibility for all aspects of these engagements.
- **Speak-up policy** – Encourages staff to report concerns about misconduct or unethical behaviour safely and confidentially, ensuring accountability and a culture of integrity.
- **MDU code of conduct** – Sets out the standards of behaviour expected of our staff, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and ethical guidelines.
- **Supplier code of conduct** – Establishes clear expectations for our suppliers to uphold the highest ethical standards and comply with the Modern Slavery Act.
- **Supplier site visit and audit guidance** – Ensures that supplier site visits and audits are carried out systematically, strengthening oversight and identifying risks in our supply chain.
- **Right to work** – We have well- established procedures to verify the legal entitlement of staff to work in the UK.

Through these policies and procedures, we proactively manage modern slavery risks, fostering a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability.

## Risk assessment and due diligence

We have assessed the risk of modern slavery within our operations and supply chain as low, based on the nature of our business and the types of services and goods we procure. Our supply base primarily consists of software providers, infrastructure suppliers, professional service firms (e.g., business consultants, facilities management) and marketing merchandise suppliers. The majority of our suppliers are based in the UK or Europe, though we also work with suppliers located globally.

To ensure ongoing oversight, we regularly assess modern slavery risks and conduct additional reviews when there are regulatory changes or developments in our supply chain. This helps us proactively identify potential risks, assess their likelihood and implement effective controls to mitigate them.

As part of the onboarding process for new suppliers, we conduct a detailed risk assessment based on sector, geographical location and the materiality of the goods or services provided. Our updated Request for Proposal template requires suppliers to provide their modern slavery policies, evidence of compliance and a history of any related incidents. All MDU contractual templates include anti-slavery clauses to mitigate the risk of modern slavery and new suppliers are informed of our Supplier Code of Conduct during onboarding.

## **Training and awareness**

We maintain a training programme, with managers responsible for ensuring their teams complete all required training. We provide targeted training to relevant staff to raise awareness of modern slavery risks and equip them to identify and address potential issues.

This year we have focused on educating staff about our updated Procurement Policy through webinars and supporting materials. We regularly update guidance to reflect emerging risks and good practices, ensuring our teams remain proactive and well-informed.

## **Further steps**

In 2025, we will further strengthen our approach to managing modern slavery risks by refreshing our training programme for key personnel, ensuring they are equipped to effectively identify and address potential modern slavery risks. We will also continue to update our policies to stay aligned with best practices and evolving regulations.

In addition, we plan to consolidate our supplier base through a supplier reduction exercise, enhancing oversight and minimising risk exposure. These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to upholding the highest ethical standards and preventing modern slavery within both our operations and supply chain.

This statement will be reviewed annually and is published on the MDU's homepage. Approved by the MDU Board, it is issued in accordance with section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, serving as our modern slavery statement for the financial year ending 31 December 2024.



**Dr Matthew Lee**  
Chief Executive Officer  
April 2025

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