

Kier first UK contractor to tackle modern slavery through its Mental Health First Aiders

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To take action against modern slavery, Kier is the first UK contractor to train its Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) to spot the signs of modern slavery and exploitation. With 900 colleagues having become MHFAs at Kier, this new training is being delivered through Jericho, a social enterprise based in the Midlands, which is an organisation that creates positive change in society including supporting victims of modern slavery.

Kier is also introducing a Level 1 qualification that has been created with the GLAA (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority) and Skills and Education Group. This will teach people about basic employment rights provided by UK law, how to identify exploitation, how they should go about reporting it and will make them aware of signs to look out for to help them avoid being taken advantage of.

The course will be delivered remotely by Boston College and Sheffield College.

David Foster, Group legal and compliance director at Kier, said: “Modern slavery and any exploitation on site is unacceptable and, working alongside the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), we’re working to eradicate it and prevent it across our operations.

“Our Mental Health First Aiders are a fantastic community who support our colleagues and, through this new addition to their training, they will be better able to spot any signs of modern slavery trafficking or exploitation on site.

“As well as helping those that are already victims of modern slavery, we wanted to find a way to prevent people from becoming unsuspecting victims of modern slavery. Through the qualification we hope to do this and will be targeting potential attendees through our early careers team, who will predominantly engage with those joining through an apprenticeship or the Kickstart scheme.”

GLAA Head of Prevention and Partnerships Frank Hanson said: “We know only too well that construction is a high-risk sector for modern slavery so we were delighted to support Kier in providing them with the resources to train their mental health first aiders in spotting the signs of exploitation.

“This is something that could easily be replicated across the labour market and we would encourage other employers to follow Kier’s lead. They would be using existing products and by engaging with the right partners, helping to make the workplace safer for everyone, including for workers within their supply chains.”

Kier has created the below video with Jericho and the GLAA, in it you will hear from all of us and also Valdis, a victim of modern slavery:

Photo and video credit: Kier