



The Responsible Car Wash Scheme targets crime hot spots

Campaign to crack down on illegal car washes across Leicester and East Anglia

The Responsible Car Wash Scheme ([RCWS](#)) is working with police in Leicester, Norfolk and Suffolk to clamp down on illegal car washes. A number of hand car wash sites in these areas have been identified as potentially breaking business, environmental and employment laws. The RCWS has visited them to ascertain the extent of non-compliance and inform the business owners of their obligations.

The RCWS was founded in 2018 with support from the Home Office, the Police, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) and the Anti-Slavery Commission to raise standards and promote compliance at car washes across the country. This localised campaign is accompanied by notices on billboards and bus stops that will be seen in the target areas in March and April.

The hand car wash sector has consistently been identified as an industry where workers are at risk of exploitation, ranging from poor working conditions to modern day slavery. Many operate from unsuitable premises that discharge dangerous effluent into water courses and where staff are given ineffective protective equipment when handling dangerous and corrosive cleaning materials. Legitimate businesses are often undercut by those breaking the law, creating an unfair competitive landscape.

Teresa Sayers, managing director at the RCWS, says: “Having visited the sites it is evident that there are serious breaches of regulations taking place and standards urgently need to be improved. We ask car owners and drivers to choose responsible car washes that offer a fair wash. That means ones that look after their workers, protect the environment, care for their customers and trade legally.”

Tim Passmore, Suffolk’s Police and Crime Commissioner, says: “Unfortunately there remains a number of criminal and unscrupulous operators who use forced labour and/or illegal immigrants to support their activity. These ‘employees’ are often domiciled in appalling conditions and trapped in this horrendous way of life.

“It is so important for customers to only use the service provided by companies that trade legally to stop this exploitation of vulnerable workers. I completely support the Responsible Car Wash initiative, and hope criminal operators are prosecuted and punished accordingly.”

Indicators of worker exploitation include low cost of a wash, cash-only payment options and a lack of protective equipment and clothing being used by workers. The public can be on the alert by downloading The Safe Car Wash app. This asks a series of questions related to

signs of modern slavery and helps the user know if they should get in touch with the Modern Slavery Helpline. The app has received 7,500 reports of exploitation concerns and 47% of these have gone through to the helpline since its launch in 2018.

You can [download the Safe Car Wash app here](#)

The GLAA's Head of Prevention and Partnerships, Frank Hanson, says: "As the foremost investigative agency for labour exploitation and modern slavery in the UK, the GLAA, along with other law enforcement agencies, has uncovered labour exploitation and unsafe working practices at hand car washes. Exploiting vulnerable workers is completely unacceptable and we strongly encourage anyone with concerns to report their suspicions so we can investigate and take action."

About RCWS <https://rcws.org.uk/>

The Responsible Car Wash Scheme (RCWS) is a not-for-profit organisation founded to promote compliance and raise standards in the car wash industry. It aims to be a positive force in improving conditions for workers and upholding their statutory rights. Launched in October 2018 at the House of Lords, the scheme has the backing of National and Local Government, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Police, the Health and Safety Executive, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Environment Agency and the charity Unseen, all of whom have assisted in its development.

RCWS Code of Practice:

- Consent to Trade and Trading Standards
- Financial Transparency and Corporate Governance
- Providing Safe and Hygienic Working Conditions
- Protecting the Environment
- Compliant and Ethical Employment Practices and prevention of worker exploitation

RCWS supporters

- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
- Office of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement
- Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC)
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Clewer Initiative
- Asda
- Morrisons
- Tesco
- Sainsbury's
- BP
- The Car Wash Association
- CPV
- Waves
- Unseen
- Go Wash



