



Press release – Thursday 12 July 2018

MODERN SLAVERY WIDESPREAD IN UK CAR WASHES, WITH 360 CASES INVOLVING 2170 POTENTIAL VICTIMS REPORTED TO NATIONAL HELPLINE, SAYS NEW REPORT

Modern Slavery is happening in car washes across the length and breadth of the UK, according to a new report from NGO Unseen based on 21 months of calls to its Modern Slavery Helpline since it launched in October 2016 up to June 2018.

‘Modern Slavery in Car Washes, A View from Unseen’s Modern Slavery Helpline’ says that car washes were the most common site of labour exploitation/ forced labour reported across all calls to the Helpline, comprising 23% of all potential victims indicated and 15% of all modern slavery cases. This is partly due to increased awareness among the general public of potential for modern slavery at car washes in comparison to other sectors.

The report details:

- 473 calls and online reports relating to car washes
- 360 cases of modern slavery in car washes
- 2170 potential victims indicated
- 401 referrals made by the Helpline to law enforcement and other agencies
- 17% of potential victims were Romanian, making this the most common known victim nationality.
- 48 cases involving 266 potential victims were in the Greater London area, making this the region with the highest number of cases reported with 13.3% of total cases.
- 11 cases indicating 69 potential victims came in through new ‘Safe Car Wash App’ launched by the Church of England in June 2018.

Quotes

Andrew Wallis, CEO of Unseen:

“With 99% of tip-offs coming in from the general public, and only 1% from victims self-reporting, this report underlines the crucial importance of everyone being able to both recognise the signs of slavery and exploitation and being willing to report. If you use a hand car wash and the people washing your car aren’t wearing any protective gear, if they’re withdrawn, unwilling to handle the money, and if the price seems too good to be true, that should ring alarm bells. And if alarm bells ring, please call the Helpline. You could be somebody’s link to freedom.”

Justine Currell, Director of Unseen:

“The Modern Slavery Helpline exists to help victims of trafficking escape exploitation, but we also exist to provide data and analysis on the nature and scale of modern slavery in this country, crucial to helping understand and fight this crime. This report has been submitted to the [Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry on Hand Car Washes](#) chaired by Mary Creagh MP, as well as being shared with our partners in law enforcement. Working together, we can eradicate slavery.”

ENDS



Notes for editors

About Unseen and the Modern Slavery Helpline:

Unseen is a modern slavery charity that operates a micro to macro approach to tackling slavery: by directly supporting survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery through safe accommodation, reintegration and outreach services; equipping frontline staff and businesses with the training and tools to correctly identify victims and take appropriate action; and influencing governments at a strategic level to create long-lasting global solutions to modern slavery. Unseen also operates the UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and provides consultancy and training to businesses to help them better understand the issue of modern slavery in supply chains and their own organisation. In 2015, Unseen was awarded, Charity of the Year: with an income of less than £1 million, by Charity Times Awards.

The UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre, established in October 2016, provides victims, the public, statutory agencies and businesses with access to information and support on a 24/7 basis. Potential victims, who call the Helpline, can talk to fully trained call handlers who will guide and assist them to access relevant services including Government-funded support through the National Referral Mechanism. Statutory agencies calling the Helpline will be supported in dealing with potential victims and signposted to the range of information, guidance and tools available through the associated resource centre. To raise awareness of the Helpline and ensure that it provides the services that potential callers want, we are working closely with a range of diverse stakeholders including law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations, businesses, media and faith organisations.

Calls and reports to the Modern Slavery Helpline can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 08000 121 700, submitting a report online at <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report>, or by using the Unseen App.