

# **ISOCYANATES AWARENESS**

## **Campaign Toolkit**

**October 2025**



## Introduction

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This toolkit supports HSE's targeted campaign to reduce exposure to isocyanates in the motor vehicle repair (MVR) industry. HSE has launched 1,000 targeted inspections of motor vehicle repair businesses across Great Britain to tackle occupational asthma.

These inspections run alongside a focused communications campaign through the [Work Right website](#).

## Why it matters

- Motor vehicle repair paint sprayers have **one of the highest incidences of occupational asthma** according to HSE statistics.
- Many skilled vehicle paint sprayers develop occupational asthma each year.
- Once asthma develops, even small amounts of isocyanate exposure can trigger severe attacks, often making continued work in the industry impossible for affected workers.
- Isocyanates accounted for 30 out of 65 new Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit cases in 2022, representing 13.3% of all occupational asthma diagnoses reported between 1998 and 2022.

## Audience

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This campaign is relative to all dutyholders and employees in the Motor Vehicle Repair (MVR) sector however it particularly targets a primary audience of **employers and small business owners**, and a secondary target of **paint sprayer workers**.

As an audience these are businesses and workers who are either unaware of legal requirements, want to comply and require guidance and support, or who are aware but may be cutting corners and breaking the law.

## Objectives

Key to success of the campaign is our collective efforts to **raise awareness** of isocyanate risks and occupational asthma. Ensure employers and workers understand the inspection initiative, control measures, and legal requirements.

An increase in awareness should lead to **improved compliance**, where we would see an increase in biological monitoring and health surveillance uptake in the industry. HSE operate one of the four laboratories across the country that test samples for isocyanates. The others have agreed to share any evidence of increased uptake with us.

Another key indicator of the campaign's performance will be a **traffic increase** of views to HSE guidance and resources.

## Key messages

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### Core

*Isocyanates are the leading cause of occupational asthma in the UK. Every year, vehicle paint sprayers develop this life-changing condition. Once they have it, even tiny amounts of isocyanate exposure can trigger an attack, which often forces them to leave the profession completely.*

### Inspections

*HSE has launched 1,000 targeted inspections of motor vehicle repair businesses across Great Britain. Businesses found to be breaching the COSHH Regulations may face improvement notices, prohibition notices, or prosecution leading to unlimited fines.*

### Legal Requirements

*Under COSHH, employers must prevent or control worker exposure to isocyanates using effective control measures and safe working procedures. They must also verify these measures are working by arranging regular health surveillance and biological monitoring - both are legally required for workers exposed to isocyanates.*

### Workers

*Never spray 2-pack (2K) paints outside a proper spray booth or room. Always use air-fed breathing apparatus - filtering respirators will not protect you. Stay masked until outside spray area and the minimum clearance time has passed. Never lift visors in the spray area.*

## Campaign assets

### Digital resources

[Social media graphics and example posts](#) highlighting key safety messages.

YouTube video with HSE's Biological Monitoring Lead demonstrating monitoring procedures

Work Right landing page with comprehensive guidance: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/isocyanates/>

### Print resources

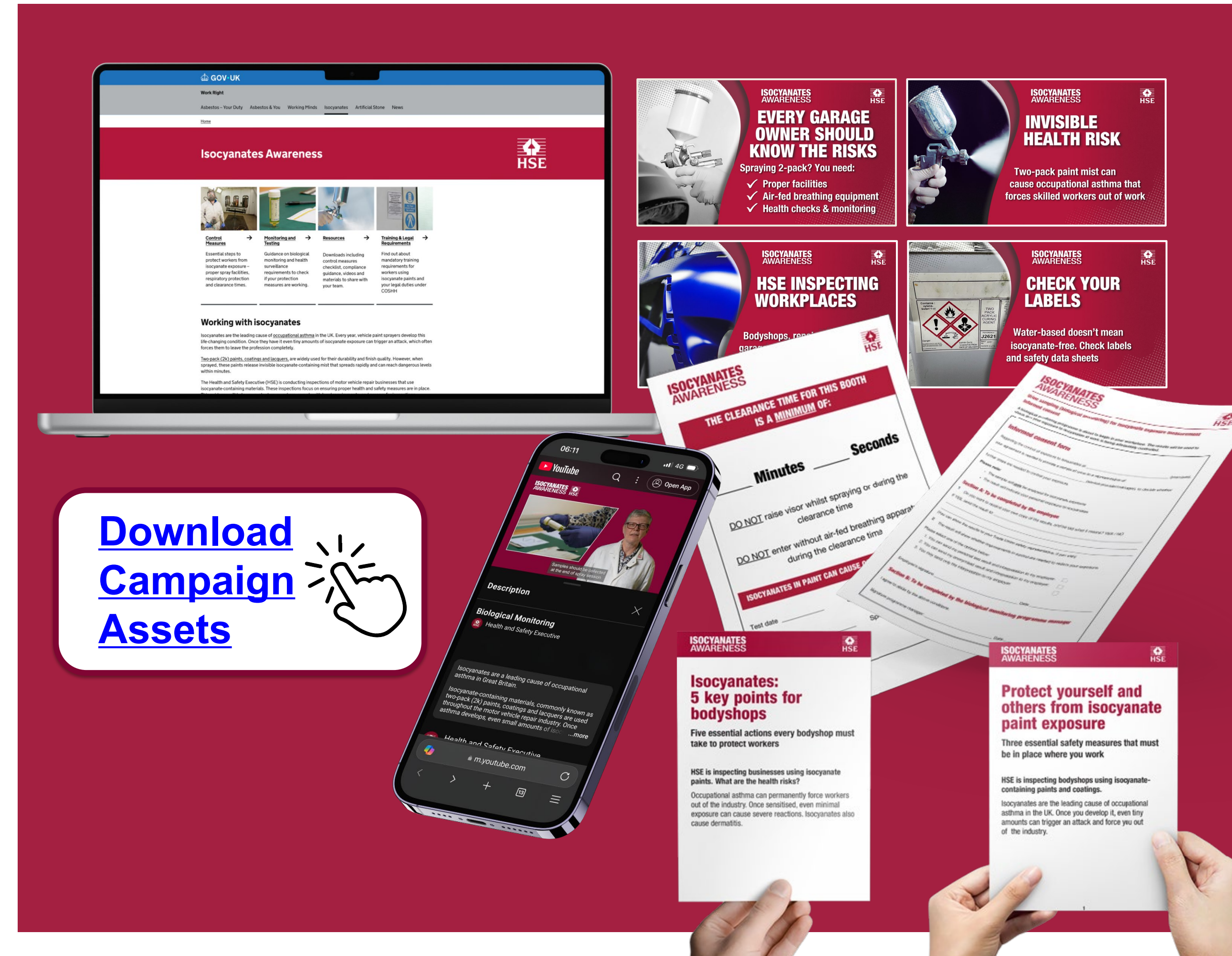
[Worker guidance leaflet](#) focusing on protective measures

[Employer compliance leaflet](#) outlining legal requirements

[Spray booth clearance time certificate template](#)

[Employee informed consent template](#) for biological monitoring

[COSHH essentials advice sheets](#) specific to MVR



## Quick Win!

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### **Make employers aware this is a legal requirement**

**We know that many employers in the industry, particularly smaller ones, are simply not aware of their legal duties around isocyanate exposure. If you have existing or planned content available, a quick win is to add in a line that lets employers know of their obligations:**

“Isocyanates are the leading cause of occupational asthma in the UK. Employers must prevent or control worker exposure to isocyanates using effective control measures and safe working procedures. They must also verify these measures are working by arranging regular health surveillance and biological monitoring - both are legally required for workers exposed to isocyanates.”

**We understand that you may wish to attribute this to HSE rather than your organisation so could also add:**

“As Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety, The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) can take action where it can be shown that their legal duty on control measures and health surveillance are not being followed, or that isocyanate exposure has not been risk assessed. HSE inspectors have the power to:

- Issue improvement notices requiring specific changes within set timeframes
- Issue prohibition notices to stop dangerous work immediately
- Prosecute, leading to unlimited fines and potential imprisonment

## Ready-to-use newsletter copy

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**Suggested wording to share on your own news pages, newsletters or emails. Feel free to adapt to your own tone, include more information relevant to your work area, as well as a quote from a spokesperson.**

[Your organisation] supports the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) campaign to protect motor vehicle repair workers from isocyanate exposure.

HSE has launched a targeted inspection initiative involving 1,000 inspections across Great Britain to protect paint sprayers from exposure to isocyanate-containing paints, coatings and lacquers. Isocyanates are the leading cause of occupational asthma in the UK, with the potential to end careers permanently once workers become sensitised.

Motor vehicle repair businesses must implement three essential safety measures: proper spray booth ventilation, air-fed breathing apparatus for all paint sprayers, and measurable clearance times before anyone enters treated areas. Regular health surveillance biological monitoring (urine testing is the simplest method) are also legal requirements under COSHH Regulations.

Businesses found breaching regulations may face improvement notices, prohibition notices, or prosecution with unlimited fines.

The campaign aims to raise awareness and ensure compliance to protect workers' health and preserve careers in the industry.

For more information and guidance, visit: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/isocyanates/>

## Get involved!

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We welcome partnership opportunities to maximise the reach and impact of this important safety campaign.

### Available support:

- Spokespersons for quotes, events and webinars
- Co-branded content creation
- Joint training
- Technical expert briefings
- Help drafting a survey for your members

### Content collaboration:

- Guest articles for your channels or ours
- Case study development
- Interview opportunities with HSE experts
- Podcast appearances

We also welcome any other contributions and suggestions.

## Please help us measure effectiveness by sharing:

- Social media reach and engagement metrics
- Newsletter open rates and click-through data
- Member feedback and survey responses
- Website traffic to campaign resources
- Training session attendance and feedback

## Contact and Support

Campaign Team

Contact: [campaigns@hse.gov.uk](mailto:campaigns@hse.gov.uk)