

SUNBED UNDERAGE SALES TEST PURCHASE EXERCISE	7TH NOVEMBER 2017
TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	
FOR INFORMATION	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Compliance with Statutory Duty
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment
Cost: (If applicable)	Officer Time (TOIL)

Background

District Councils have a statutory duty to enforce the provisions of The Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which came into effect in May 2012. The Act prohibits the use/sale and/or hire of sunbeds to persons under the age of 18. The aim of the legislation is to reduce the likelihood of the use/ sale and or hire of sunbeds being made to children.

Research on sun exposure has shown that sunburn in childhood can greatly increase the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. The Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (YPBAS) 2013 revealed that 10% of young persons under the age of 16, although aware of the dangers of sunbeds, still used sunbeds and some of these were in commercial sunbed premises.

To raise awareness of the above legislation and assess compliance by sunbed premises across the Borough a test purchase exercise was conducted on 23 August 2017 by Council Environmental Health Officers.

Test Purchase Exercise Protocol

The test purchase guideline document is based on the procedures used by Councils to carry out similar exercises in relation to tobacco products and volatile substances. All test purchase exercises are therefore carried out in accordance with Local Government Regulation (formerly LACORS) "Code of Best Practice" on test purchasing as endorsed by the Home Office. The test purchase involved sending a young person under 18 years of age, on this occasion a 16 year old child, into a sunbed premises to ask to buy a sunbed session.

Council's Environmental Health Officers have been working with sunbed premises in the Borough since the legislation was introduced to make them all aware of the new legislation and its implications for them. This included personal visits, written information and prevention visits to the premises.

All sunbed premises are written to once per year reminding them of their legal obligations prior to the test exercise taking place with guidance on how to prevent a sale to an underage child. Within said letter the sunbed premises owner was also informed that a test purchase exercise was going to be carried out.

Outcome

The test purchase exercise was carried out across the Borough on 23 August 2017. A total of 10 premises were selected. One premises sold a sunbed session to the child and was subsequently issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice which was paid.

Discussion

This was the third test purchase exercise of sunbeds within the Borough and demonstrates this activity is necessary to ensure young people are protected from the known health risks associated with exposure to sunbeds. Enforcement action is taken where non compliances are detected.

The high compliance rate in the 9 other premises where no sale was made can be attributed to the diligence shown by sunbed premises owners in applying the legislation working closely with Environmental Health Officers and the ongoing commitment shown by Council in this education and enforcement programme.