

# Wales bans the intimate piercing of under 18s

The new law, coming into force today is making it an offence for piercing practitioners to arrange and/ or carry out an intimate piercing on under 18s.

The aim of the new law is to protect children and young people from the potential health harms which can be caused by an intimate piercing.

The change will come under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, prohibiting the intimate piercing of persons under the age of 18 in Wales. It will also be an offence to 'make arrangements' to perform an intimate piercing on a child or young person under the age of 18 in Wales.

The intimate piercing of children and young people under 18 could also be considered a child protection issue. By undergoing an intimate piercing procedure, young people under the age of 18 may be placed in a vulnerable position.

During a visit to Frontier Tattoo Parlour in Cardiff to discuss the new law, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Frank Atherton said;

"In line with The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, this new law is in place to ensure we can protect children and young people's health and wellbeing.

"It's concerning that a third of young people with intimate piercings have reported complications following a procedure. The child protection issues that could also arise from this scenario highlight even further, the importance of implementing such a law.

"I hope this piece of legislation will help to reduce these issues, and that practitioners understand the importance of obtaining proof of age beforehand".

The Chief Dental Officer for Wales, Dr Colette Bridgman said:

"Tongue piercing can lead to lasting damage to teeth and gums, and can cause serious swelling in the mouth that can affect breathing. Many dentists in Wales have seen patients who have permanent harm following piercing and dental teams in Wales really welcome this new law".

A study in England found that amongst individuals aged 16-24 complications

were reported with around a third of all body piercings. The same study found a higher incidence of complications in connection with certain types of body piercings, including intimate piercings. Problems were most likely to be reported in the case of tongue piercing (50%), followed by piercings of the genitals (45%) and the nipples (38%).

As young people continue to grow during their teenage years, an intimate piercing performed at a young age could result in further complications arising as their bodies develop. Young people may also be less likely to have the experience or knowledge of how to clean or maintain an intimate piercing, leading to an increased risk of infection.

Local authority enforcement officers and Police Officers have received training in advance of the new law coming into effect to enable them to enforce the new legislation effectively.

Intimate piercing practitioners operating in Wales are encouraged to ensure they have a rigid system in place to help them confirm proof of age, and to obtain signed consent for each procedure to avoid prosecution and a fine.

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## [Fly-grazing incidents down following Landmark Act](#)

Three years on from the introduction by the Welsh Government of a law to address “flygrazing”, a new report shows it has had a positive impact in reducing the number of horses reported and removed due to fly-grazing straying or abandonment.

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The report by Equiventus Ltd shows a clear link between the reduction in this behaviour and the approach taken to the problem in Wales, including the swift introduction of the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014.

Other key interventions include an increase in education programmes for horse owners, a rise in public awareness of the problem and improved communication and collaborative working between the key agencies involved.

Welcoming the publication of the report, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said

“Last year I commissioned Equiventus Ltd to evaluate the value and effectiveness of the Control of Horses (Wales) Act and to consider

whether this had resulted in benefits for communities across Wales.

“It is positive news indeed the Act has played such an important role in reducing the number of horses reported and ultimately removed due to fly grazing, straying or abandonment. It is clear from the report’s findings that the Act has made a positive impact on reducing behaviour that has caused so many difficulties for the communities affected and for the animals involved.

“However, while the report by Equiventus Ltd is very good news we should not let our guard down and must continue with the partnership approach, with local authorities, the Police, landowners and welfare organisations to deliver on the report’s recommendations. I am determined to continue to do what’s needed to combat the blight on communities caused by incidents of fly grazing, straying and abandonment of horses and ponies.”

A copy of the report and the Welsh Government’s response can be found on the Welsh Government [website](#).

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## [Minister sees how Welsh Government schemes are helping people into work](#)

The Minister met with the delivery teams of both programmes and local residents who have benefitted from the schemes. Both programmes are supported by the EU and will operate until 2020. Combined, they will provide over £83 million in employment services across Wales.

Delivered in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions through Job Centre Plus, Communities for Work is a community based advisory service, supported by the European Social Fund. It works with people in the most deprived communities across Wales to increase the employability of 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and

economically inactive and long-term unemployed adults who have complex barriers to employment. The programme has so far supported over 13,000 people and helped almost 4000 into work up to December 2017

PaCE helps economically inactive parents into work by covering the cost of childcare while parents undertake training to gain the skills they need to get a job. Across Wales, 43 PaCE advisers work in community settings to help people find a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers so that they can move towards and into sustainable employment. Jointly delivered by the Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions, the programme builds upon services offered via Flying Start and Families First and complements other projects such as Communities for Work. The scheme has helped over 750 parents into work so far

The Minister said:

“I found the visit to the Noddfa Centre both interesting and inspiring. It was a pleasure to meet those who have benefitted from both the Communities for Work and PaCE schemes and to hear how they have overcome their difficulties to find work and training opportunities.

“Sustainable employment is still the best route out of poverty. These programmes combined support the most deprived communities as well as rural areas across Wales and provide a real opportunity to help people achieve their aspirations.”

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## [Project gives Welsh speaking throat cancer sufferers a voice](#)

The *Lleisiwr* project, which has received £20,000 from the Cymraeg 2050 grant fund, develops technology which builds personal synthetic voices for Welsh speakers at risk of losing their ability to speak due to diseases such as throat cancer. It is being developed by Canolfan Bedwyr at Bangor University, in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and, once ready, will be available across Wales.

Currently, patients who have lost their voices only have access to English medium synthetic voices which impacts on their ability to converse with friends and family with whom they have always spoken Welsh.

The Cymraeg 2050 grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It provides small grants of up to £20,000 each to fund innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase

people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh. Twenty-six projects were approved in the first round of funding last year while a second round of funding will open for applications later this year.

The Minister said:

"Today's visit has been both informative and very inspiring. I have built a career on my ability to speak so know maybe more than most how devastating it would be to lose that ability through illness. A far greater loss would be to lose the ability to speak to my family and friends in the language we use every day so I am delighted Bangor University and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board are working on the Welsh Voices project and proud the Welsh Government is contributing to the project."

Following the visit, Head of the Language Technologies Unit at Canolfan Bedwyr, Delyth Prys, said:

"It was a pleasure to welcome the Minister for the Welsh Language and to showcase this project. This hugely exciting project gives us an opportunity to apply our Welsh language speech technology in a way that benefits patients. We look forward to the feedback from patients as they're referred to us by the National Health Service, and to further developing this technology in the future."

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## [We are gambling with our health, says Chief Medical Officer](#)

In his second annual report, *Gambling with our Health*, Dr Atherton calls for more support for those experiencing gambling-related harm in Wales, better research and monitoring of the impact of gambling on health, and for greater regulatory control of gambling in Wales and the UK.

In Wales, 61% of adults gambled in the last 12 months. 1.1% of the population, which is equivalent to 30,000 people, self-reported as having a problem with gambling. A further 3.8% of people in Wales are estimated to be at risk of problem gambling in Wales.

Whilst recognising that gambling can be a source of enjoyment, it can lead to financial difficulty and harm, including anxiety, stress, depression and alcohol and substance misuse. Gambling does not just affect the individual; it can impact on their family, friends and wider society.

Dr Atherton is calling on the Welsh Government to agree a strong and ambitious action plan to reduce gambling-related harm across Wales, to make effective use of its existing powers to minimise the harm from gambling, and to seek to extend these powers. He also calls on the UK Government to take stronger action to restrict advertising of gambling products, to improve player protection, and to impose a levy on the industry to research, prevent and correct the adverse effects of gambling.

The Chief Medical Officer launched his annual report at the Newport Citizens Advice Bureau today. He was joined by Tim Miller, executive director of the Gambling Commission who welcomed his report.

Dr Atherton said:

“I’m pleased to present my second report as Chief Medical Officer for Wales, and I intend to use this as a platform to highlight areas of emerging or underestimated public health importance, which is why we have decided to focus on gambling-related harm.

“While it may be harmless fun for some, gambling has great potential to cause harm to individuals and can have devastating effects on the people closest to them, and communities.

“There are still big gaps in our understanding of this issue, and we need to reduce stigma around gambling so that more people who require help come forward.

“I hope my annual report will help highlight this issue, to be addressed, before it becomes a major public health issue.”

Tim Miller, executive director of the Gambling Commission said:

“Gambling related harm is a public health concern and the Gambling Commission is committed to preventing that harm. We’re pleased Dr Atherton is raising awareness of the impacts that gambling can have to both individuals and those around them.

“As the gambling regulator, we will continue to work with public health professionals, government and the industry to forge a sustained, world-leading approach to make gambling safer for people across Wales and the rest of Great Britain.”