

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.