

Title of Report:	SUNBED UNDERAGE SALES TEST PURCHASE EXERCISE
Committee Report Submitted To:	ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	10th December 2019
For Decision or For Information	FOR INFORMATION

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Compliance with statutory duty
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Officer Time (TOIL)
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:

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 had used sunbeds despite being aware of their danger. Some of these young people had used sunbeds 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 in August 2019 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, 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 raise awareness and highlight its implications for them. This has included visits to relevant premises and provision of written information.

All sunbed premises are written to once a year reminding them of their legal obligations with guidance on how to prevent a sale to an underage child prior to the test exercise taking place. The letter informs the sunbed premises owner that a test purchase exercise will be carried out but does not state the date when this will take place.

Outcome

The test purchase exercise was carried out across the Borough in August 2019. A total of 11 premises were selected. No sales were made at any of these premises.

Discussion

This activity is necessary to ensure young people are protected from the known health risks associated with exposure to sunbeds.

The high compliance rate can be attributed to the diligence shown by sunbed premises owners in applying the legislation and the ongoing commitment shown by Council in this education and enforcement programme.