

'Before You Ink – Think' Supporting Safe Tattooing

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Background: The aim of the initiative was to encourage safe tattooing in Cardiff by:

- supporting young people in making informed safe decisions about having a tattoo
- working with registered tattooists to ensure regulatory compliance and good standards of infection control within their premises.

Education is key to empowering individuals by raising consciousness of health issues. People are then more able to make choices and to create pressure for healthy environments in which to have tattoos. Young people who have the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in decision making are better able to access resources and shape policy to meet their needs. The support of individuals is necessary for implementing change. Working for empowerment enhances individual autonomy and enables young people to take more control over their lives. It was hoped that combining this with industry engagement and enforcement visits would provide a more sustainable improvement.

Method: The initiative took place between 2013 and 2014 in Cardiff and involved the production and promotion of a video in Cardiff Schools, hosting a business forum for registered tattooists, implementing unannounced infection control visits to tattoo studios and evaluating the work.

Results

551 pupils participated in the promotion of the video; 42% were thinking about having a tattoo, 5% already had one, 54% found the video 'useful' or 'very useful' and 84% liked the way the facts were presented and the overall presentation of the video.

39 tattooists attended the forum where it was agreed

- That unannounced enforcement visits were more effective in assessing standards.
- the current registration scheme was ineffective in managing infection control risks and protecting Public Health. Licensing would be more effective.
- Tattoo Hygiene Rating Scheme is a way of improving standards after a basic level of compliance is achieved

Unannounced visits

17 (71%) visited were found to be 'satisfactory or better, 7 (29%) had poor levels of compliance. Non compliances included:'

Infection control standard	No. of studios requiring improvements
Hand washing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate facilities • good hand washing technique • liquid soap available • Non hand operated/optical taps used 	6 (25%) 6 (25%) 4 (17%) 6 (25%)
Cleaning and disinfection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct dilutions rates & contact times • Equipment effectively cleaned and disinfected 	5 (21%) 3 (13%)
Client healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of aftercare leaflets • Completion of medical forms 	4 (17%) 3 (13%)
Equipment use and structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment used correctly • Disposable needles used • Treatment rooms adequately segregated • Easily cleaned/good standard of repair 	2 (8%) 1 (4%) 1 (4%) 1 (4%)

Infections associated with tattooing and piercing

6 cases of *M. chelonae* associated with a South Wales tattooist in 2014



Five suffer serious skin infections after using tattoo and piercing studio in Newport South Wales
Evening Post 06/05/15

Piercing studios linked to Pseudomonas outbreak 2016



EH News March 2015 – Welsh parties 'playing games' with bill

'Public Health experts have accused Labour and Plaid Cymru of playing 'political games' after the Welsh public health bill failed to become law'

What did we learn/moving forward

- There is a greater public health gain when both the population at risk (young and poorly informed people) and the potential source of the risk (registered and illegal tattooists) are targeted simultaneously.
- Consulting with this industry has had a long term public health benefit:
 - Increased reporting of illegal tattooists.
 - When the outbreak of *M. chelonae* occurred the development of trust enabled a more production investigation and facilitated further proactive work. This in turn was used as evidence for the proposed Special Procedures in the recent Public Health Bill.
 - Tattooists and regulators generally engage more proactively with each other.
- Cardiff is now part of Shared Regulatory Services which manages two additional councils – Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan. Another Forum was held on 5th October 2016 and was extended to cosmetic piercers and semi permanent make-up artists. Views remain consistent:
 - Industry (and regulators) want a licensing scheme similar to that previously proposed in the Public Health Bill.
 - Unannounced visits are considered the best method of assessing standards.