

<b>SUNBED UNDERAGE SALES TEST PURCHASE EXERCISE</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> April 2016</b>
<b>TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>FOR INFORMATION</b>	

<b>Linkage to Corporate Plan</b>	
<b>Strategic Priority</b>	Resilient Healthy & Engaged Communities
<b>Objective</b>	To advise members of the outcome of an initiative aimed at raising awareness and assessing compliance of age restricted legislation in relation to the sale or hire of sunbeds young persons and children.
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Bryan Edgar
<b>Cost: (If applicable)</b>	

## 1.0 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 purchases exercise was conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016 by Council Environmental Health Officers.

### 1.1 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 were written to prior to the test exercise taking place reminding them of their legal responsibilities 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. This letter was hand delivered to all premises during further advisory visits during February 2016.

## **1.2 Outcome**

The test purchase exercise was carried out across the Borough on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016. A total of 9 randomly selected sunbed premises were visited which is approximately half of such premises within the Borough.

All sunbed premises tested refused to sell a sunbed session to the child and therefore represented a 100% compliance rate on this occasion.

## **1.3 Discussion**

No test purchase exercise of sunbeds had previously been carried out across the legacy council areas so this was the first test purchase of sunbed premises within the Borough since the introduction of the legislation. It is therefore reassuring to have such a high compliance rate and this 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.