

Control of cosmetic enhancements welcome

Greater controls over the growing trade in high-street cosmetic treatments would be welcomed, West Lothian councillors have agreed, as they raised concerns about how any such rules could be enforced.

Cosmetic treatments such as botox- including at-home botox parties- and dermal fillers have grown in recent years, but there are concerns that some treatments can be carried out by anyone without proper training.

Responding to a Scottish government consultation on extending licensing, Environmental Health officers told West Lothian councillors that it's difficult to police what are "elective and voluntary procedures."

Additional environmental health and licensing duties will also put pressure on a council department struggling with its current workload.

In a report to the Executive this week Craig Smith, the council's Environmental and Trading Standards Manager said: "Whilst the risks of harm to people choosing to undergo procedures is real and recognised, it is also recognised that many, if not most, procedures are elective and voluntary on the part of the client.

"So, it is difficult to fully support the introduction of these controls, knowing that in many cases clients are putting

themselves at risk out of choice, when local authorities do not have adequate resources to protect wider public health and safety in other higher priority areas of work.”

Currently some procedures are licensed under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 These include skin piercing, tattooing and micro-blading- the procedure which creates semi-permanent eyebrows by colouring fine cuts in the skin.

However, there are an ever-increasing number of treatments-known as non-surgical cosmetic procedures (NSCP)- which fall out with the scope of the current licensing scheme.

If they are not carried out by medical practitioners (which are regulated by Healthcare Inspectorate Scotland (HIS)), they are more or less unregulated.

The consultation asks for views on the proposed controls on (NSCP).

These include biotherapy, or injections of any products derived from the patient’s blood; injections to treat varicose veins, dermal micro coring, or skin removal; the removal of skin tags, or any procedure such liposuction which removes fat or fluid intravenously.

These are procedures which Holyrood suggests should only be carried out in either an independent clinic or other healthcare setting regulated by HIS, or an establishment which is licensed by the local authority.

It also suggests that wherever procedures take place they should be carried out by a suitably trained and qualified practitioner or by an appropriate healthcare professional. Clarification should be sought on the levels of training required.

The report to the Executive said: “Whilst there are clearly concerns regarding the unregulated aspects on NSCPs, any new

requirements for licensing or control will place additional burdens on local authorities.

“Legal services currently administer the licences for skin piercing etc. with environmental health carrying out the necessary inspections for licence, alongside other ongoing statutory obligations for enforcing health and safety legislation in these establishments.

It added: “Even if local authorities can apply charges for licensing it is unlikely to provide any additional staff resource to address the work demands of this new regulatory obligation.

“It will draw staff resources from other priority workload, which is undesirable at any time, but particularly more so in the current situation where there is a significant recruitment and retention challenge in legal services, and environmental health and trading standards, locally and nationally.”

The Executive agreed with the officer response to the Holyrood consultation.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter