

National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
[Health and Social Care Committee / Y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)

[Public Health \(Wales\) Bill / Bil Iechyd y Cyhoedd \(Cymru\)](#)

Evidence from the Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons – PHB 36 / Tystiolaeth gan Gyfadran Llawfeddygaeth Ddeintyddol, Coleg Brenhinol y Llawfeddygon – PHB 36

**National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee
Scrutiny of the Public Health (Wales) Bill**

Evidence from the Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons

Introduction

The Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England is a professional body committed to enabling dentists and specialists to provide patients with the highest possible standards of practice and care. We represent over 5500 specialist dentists who work in primary care, hospital and public health settings in fields such as orthodontics, restorative dentistry and paediatric dentistry.

Our response relates to the proposals in Parts 3 and of 4 the proposed Public Health (Wales) Bill to introduce compulsory licensing in relation to body piercing, and prohibit the intimate piercing of children under 16 years of age.

As specialist dentists, we are confronted with a significant number of complications which arise from the practice of piercing various sites within the mouth, especially the lips and tongue. These complications not only include the loss, fracture or excessive wear of teeth as well as irreversible gum damage, but also severe bacterial and fungal infections, prolonged bleeding and recurrent ulceration. Therefore our comments are restricted to the proposals in relation to oral piercing.

Part 3: Special Procedures

Part 3 of the Bill provides for the creation of a mandatory licensing scheme for businesses/practitioners offering specified ‘Special Procedures’, namely acupuncture, body piercing, electrolysis and tattooing.¹

Reliable and high quality research studies have indicated that around 80 per cent of piercings take place in tattoo establishments² but those undertaking the piercings have little, if any, knowledge of the anatomy of the regions involved, whilst only 30 per cent of customers were told of any potential risks or complications of the procedures.³

The Faculty therefore support the proposals in the Bill for the licensing and regulation of providers of body piercing to ensure these issues are addressed. Our view is that customers should be required to give informed consent for oral piercings, as for other oral/dental procedures, once all the risks have been explained. As a consequence, under current legislation, this would limit the oral piercing of children under 16 years of age without parental consent.

Part 4: Intimate Piercing

Part 4 of the Bill introduces a prohibition on the intimate piercing of persons under the age of 16 years.⁴

The Faculty is concerned that the mouth is not explicitly included in the list of intimate body parts defined in the Bill under section 79 subsection (2), and urge the Committee to consider its inclusion either in this section, or as an additional clause.

As detailed above, lip and tongue piercings in particular can lead to complications so these should be prohibited for children under 16 years of age to protect them from potential health risks.

¹ Public Health (Wales) Bill, Explanatory Memorandum, June 2015;

<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/pri-ld10224-em/pri-ld10224-em-e.pdf>

² Garcia-Pola MJ, Garcia-Martin JM, Varela-Centelles P, Bilbao- Alonso A, Cerero-Lapiedra R, Seoane J. Oral and facial piercing: associated complications and clinical repercussion. *Quintessence Int* 2008;39:51–59

³ Vozza I, Fusco F, Bove E, Ripari F, Corridore D, Ottolenghi L. Awareness of risks related to oral piercing in Italian piercers. Pilot study in Lazio Region. *Ann Stomatol (Roma)*. 2015 Feb 9;5(4):128-30.

⁴ Public Health (Wales) Bill, Explanatory Memorandum, June 2015;

<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/pri-ld10224-em/pri-ld10224-em-e.pdf>