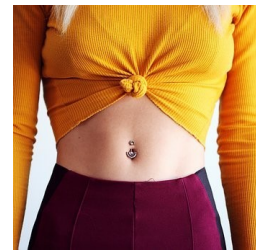


Body piercing – School Resource Pack

School Resource Pack

This resource pack is designed to equip school staff and other professionals to deliver key messages to young people about body piercing and body modification and to raise awareness about the dangers for young people associated with unlicensed body piercing operations.

The resource pack is supported by a Lesson Plan, Power Point presentation slide deck and an information leaflet.



Why is it important to understand the public health risks?

Barnet Public Health recognises how popular it can be for young people to have body piercings or other forms of body modifications.

Body modifications have a long history in various cultures around the world. A young person may see these as an expression of self identity or culturally important.

Unfortunately, when body modification procedures are not done responsibly, children and young people are at risk of harm. For this reason, we have been working in partnership with PHE and Barnet Environmental Health Services, to produce this resource pack for use with young people as an important step towards enabling children, young people and their parents to make informed decisions about the choices

they make.

We are aware that children and young people may access illegal and unlicensed body piercing operations, taking place primarily within peoples homes by friends or booked through social media. These unlicensed operations are likely to have little or no infection control in place.

Improper and unhygienic practice may result in localised skin infections at the site of the piercing or tattoo or risk of more serious bacterial infections such as Tetanus. There is also the risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses, for example Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV, which can have more serious and long term health consequences.

Anyone can purchase needles, machines, and jewellery online and start to carry out piercings without any formal train-

ing or knowledge of infection control.

Blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis can be passed from person to person from reusing needles.

Other complications can include damage to teeth and gum recession from mouth/lip/tongue piercings and allergic reactions to materials chemicals used.

It is impossible to police the internet to stop the sale of piercing equipment being sold and the quality of the equipment can vary between manufacturer.

Therefore understanding the risks involved and enabling children and young people to be better informed is critical to safeguarding their health.

Risks to health:

- ⇒ *Localised infection*
- ⇒ *Tetanus*
- ⇒ *Sepsis*
- ⇒ *Blood Borne viruses such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C*
- ⇒ *HIV*
- ⇒ *Teeth damage*
- ⇒ *Gum recession*
- ⇒ *Allergic reactions*



Different forms of body modification

Body Piercing is just one form of body modification. Some types of body modification are relatively new while others have been practiced for centuries across many different cultures. Body modifications can range from small to extreme changes to the appearance here are some examples:

Body Piercing- any form of treatment where the client's skin is broken and any article is inserted into the skin with the intention of leaving the article in the skin after treatment.

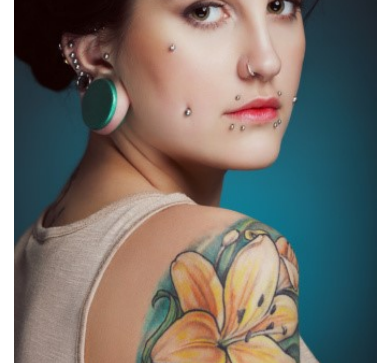
Tattoo- a mark, figure, design, or word intentionally fixed or placed on the skin usually involving injection of a pigment under the skin.

Scarification – creating permanent scarring of the skin using a scalpel and cutting a design into the skin, the healing process has to be prolonged to define the scar.

Branding – another form of scarification where the skin is scarred using a cauterising machine or in some cases just heating up a piece of copper wire with a Bunsen burner then applying it directly to the skin.

Enlargement jewellery– such as a flesh tunnel, where a larger piece of jewellery is used to increase the size of the pierced site. The stretched area will not return to normal.

Implants– insertion of inert, subcutaneous materials such as beads beneath the skin giving a raised effect.



Age and consent

While for Tattoos it is illegal for anyone under 18 to have a tattoo even with parental consent, it is more complex for body piercing.

Barnet COP 4 Cosmetic Piercing
(nose cavity walls and earlobes and upper ear cartilage)

Clients under 16 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who must sign the consent form. Where there is any doubt about the age of the client photo identification must be obtained before piercing.

Piercing of the nasal cavity walls only.

Piercing of the lower earlobe and/or flat part of the upper ear cartilage. **Piercing of the curled part of the cartilage is not permitted.**

Barnet Code of Practice 3 Special treatments (for other forms of body piercing)

- Young people must be over the age of 18 for all types of body piercing other than ear, nose, labret, eyebrow or navel (see Cosmetic Piercing)
- Under no circumstances shall the lip, tongue, the curled part of the ear cartilage, nose cartilage, nipple, genital area or any other part of any person under the age of 18 be pierced.
- No body piercing shall be administered to any person under the age of 16 with the exception of ear, nose and navel piercing or any person between the ages of 14 and 16 with parental consent.
- Person's aged between 16 and 18

must provide identification which includes a photograph and date of birth e.g. Passport or driving licence

- Anyone under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The parent/ guardian must sign a consent form at the time of the piercing (informed consent)
- Piercing of the nipples or genitalia for both sexes under the age of 16 are prohibited. Under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 girls and boys under the age of 16 cannot give legal consent to intimate sexual contact under any circumstances therefore this can be regarded as an assault offence.

For more information contact:
licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk

Reporting concerns

To help reduce the risks to public health we hope young people, parents and carers will report any known illegal activities to us so that we can reduce illegal skin piercing activities in the Borough and keep everyone safer. You can also report social media accounts , such as Instagram handles or Facebook page, that you believe are violating the law in respect of body piercing to the Licensing Team.

Please report concerns to: Barnet Licensing Team: licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk Tel: 020 8359 7443

“Only use Licensed and experienced piercers “

The Legal Position

In London the London Local authority Act 1991 enabled London councils to set their own licensing conditions for business carrying out “Special Treatments” including body piercing. The licensing conditions are there to protect public health and set out the hygiene and safety standards for the business in respect of the premises, equipment, procedures and practices.

General health and safety legislation (Health and safety at Work Act

1974) also applies.

In very serious situations or outbreaks there are more stringent public health legislation that can also be used.

Barnet Council has made regulations that deal with the licence application process and [set certain conditions](#) that the licence holder must comply with while working in the Borough. It is an offence not to do so (Regulations made by the Barnet London Borough Council

under section 7(4) and section 10 (1) of the London Local Authorities Act 1991).

This means that body piercing can only be legally undertaken through licenced piercers in L.B.Barnet.

Contact Barnet Licensing Team if you need to check if someone is licenced.

Tel: 020 8359 7443

Email:
licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk

[Licensing register | Barnet Council](#)

Public Health and infection risks

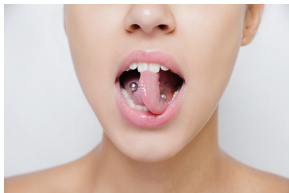
In a recent report by the Royal Society of Public Health ([Skins and Needles 2019](#)) it was reported that body piercings have been on the increase, with a shift away from traditional earlobe piercings towards other parts of the body, for example, finger piercings. A 2008 study found that 14.6% of women and 5.1% of men in England had a non-earlobe body piercing, with women aged 16-24 having the highest rates of all groups (46.2%).

The RSPH reports a survey of UK GPs in 1999 that found that 95% had come across acute complications arising from a piercing. Forty percent of GPs had seen complications from naval piercings, 35% from ear, 12% from nose, 5% from nipple and 8% across tongue, chin, eyebrows and genitals.

Across the UK there have been other incidences of serious infections. In Barnet we are also aware of unlicensed piercings causing harm to young people.

Infection risk

The skin acts as a natural physical barrier to infection, and when compromised, bacteria or other pathogenic organisms can be introduced into the body. This can be caused by poor practice but also through poor after-care.



What can go wrong?

Pain, Bleeding and Swelling Using a good and experienced tattooist or piercer will minimise the risk of this

Localised Infection This is where the wound becomes infected with bacteria and may result from having been pierced in unhygienic conditions. It can also occur if your aftercare is poor.

Infectious Disease There is a risk of contracting serious and incurable bloodborne viruses including Hepatitis (B or C or D) and HIV. The number of cases of Hepatitis has risen dramatically over the past few years and many people may not have symptoms or even realise that they are infected. A reputable tattooist or piercer will have had the vaccine for Hepatitis B.

Allergic reactions For example latex, nickel or other metals, or the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals which may come into contact with skin.

An infected piercing can be serious if it's not treated quickly. The advice is to get immediate medical help if you think a piercing is infected— contact GP or dial 111

Further information on infected piercings:

Teaching resources

Barnet Public Health in partnership with PHE and Environmental Health Services have produced a lesson plan and Power Point presentation to accompany this update and which provides an outline for a PSHE lesson or Assembly.

A leaflet aimed at young people is also available.

This can be found on:
www.information for schools

Public Health England: e-Bug lesson packs cover multiple topics including, an introduction to microbes, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, food hygiene and antibiotics. Here you will find the lesson plans, worksheets, posters and activities for each topic.

Other information and activities which may be useful:

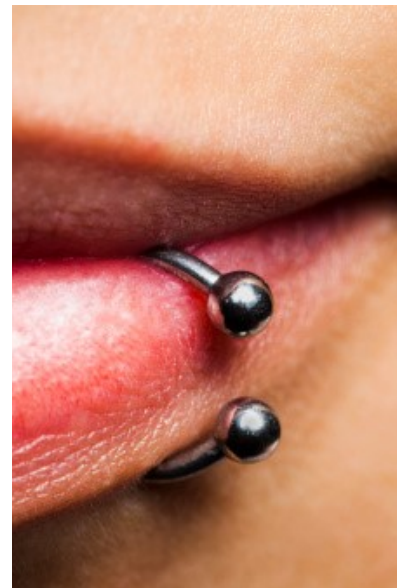
- [TES Tattoos and Piercings | Teaching Resources \(tes.com\)](https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources)
- [Short video from British Council Tattoos and body piercings](#)
- [Click view—Personal identity tattooing and body piercings](#)

Safeguarding

Young people seeking out and using unlicensed piercers may also be exposed to risks from violence and drug addiction.

We know that vulnerable people may also be encouraged by illegal operators to participate in these illegal activities leaving themselves exposed to dangers to their health and sexual exploitation issues.

If you are concerned about the safeguarding of a child contact your normal Safeguarding link within your school



References and further information

- [Barnet Licencing Conditions Code of Practice 3—Body Piercers](#)
- [The incidence of complications associated with lip and/or tongue piercings: a systematic review - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [Transmission of Hepatitis B and C Virus Infection Through Body Piercing: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [Skins and Needles RSPH 2019](#)
- [Health implications of body piercing and tattooing: a literature review | Nursing Times](#)
- [CIEH Tattooing and body piercing tool kit](#)