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When under-18s in Northern Ireland are banned from using sunbeds next spring, the Government proposes a £200 fixed penalty for sunbed operators who do not comply with the new law.

This simply does not reflect the severity of the offence or act as a deterrent. Research by the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has found that tanning salon operators can make back the money on this fine with as few as eight customers. Last year, the Government suggested a more fitting £2,500 fine.

As well as tougher penalties, including court appearances for repeat offenders, a pro-active approach through public education is needed to dissuade young people from the dangerous pursuit of a tan.

Sunbed use increases the risk of developing skin cancer, and has been medically proven to damage skin and eyesight. Every effort should be made to make these devastating consequences clear with readily-available eye protection and information in tanning salons about detecting skin cancer.

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