

**TIGHTER REGULATIONS NEEDED TO CONTROL INFECTIONS FROM SKIN**

**PIERCING**

Scottish lawyers are calling for a radical overhaul of the way in which the body piercing industry is regulated in a bid to reduce risks to health.

As the craze for skin piercing increases, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) is insisting that all body piercers should be forced to apply for a special licence so local authorities can pinpoint premises and make sure hygiene standards are up to scratch.

Scottish spokesman for APIL, David Short, said that while the Health and Safety at Work Act regulates the industry as a whole, only specific controls will help to cut back on infections.

“It is essential that a detailed, regulatory framework aimed directly at skin piercers is introduced, to ensure they work to a certain standard,” he said.

“Current regulations aren’t strict enough to monitor the industry effectively and we believe all piercers should be forced to apply for a licence so local authorities know exactly where they are, who they are and how they operate,” continued David.

Responding to a consultation issued by the Scottish Executive, the association said ongoing monitoring is essential to weed out those who don’t comply with health and safety standards.

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“Those practitioners who use dirty equipment and operate in unsuitable, dirty premises are getting away with it because they are not controlled tightly enough,” said David.

“If people know they have to register themselves and are aware the way they operate will be under scrutiny, they are less likely to neglect hygiene rules. And if they do, they should be subject to some kind of penalty.”

APIL believes education should also play a part in reducing the risks. “If skin piercers are better educated about the risks and the effects of infections and viruses on the customer, then they may adopt a better standard of practice,” he went on.

“At the end of the day, if skin and body piercing is carried out by a competent practitioner using sterile equipment and hygienic procedures there will be little risk of infection. What we want is closer monitoring, and a set of rules which tells piercers that anything less than the very highest standard is simply unacceptable.”

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