



Belfast City Council

Report to: Health and Environmental Services Committee

Subject: **Consultation Document - Proposed Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2010 – 2020**

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Relevant Background Information

On 6 October 2010, Health Minister Michael McGimpsey launched a public consultation on a proposed skin cancer prevention strategy and action plan for Northern Ireland 2010–2020. The closing date for receipt of comments is 24th December, 2010. The public consultation document and draft completed consultation response questionnaire are attached as appendices 1 and 2.

Skin Cancer in Northern Ireland.

Excessive exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) can cause DNA and tissue damage which may, in turn, lead to cancer and premature aging of the skin.

Skin cancer is now the most common form of cancer in Northern Ireland. During the period 2003-2007, an average of 2750 new cases were diagnosed annually – around 235 of which were malignant melanomas, the most serious type of skin cancer. In 2007, malignant melanoma alone caused 55 deaths, and left hundreds of people requiring surgery to remove melanomas. While overall survival rates for malignant melanoma for both sexes in Northern Ireland are the best in Europe, increased public awareness around the importance of early detection will help to increase survival rates further.

In 1997 the Department of Health and Social Services published its “Strategy for the Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Malignant Melanoma and other Skin Cancers in Northern Ireland”. Following a public launch in April 1998 an implementation group was established to take the strategy forward. In 2006, a review of the Melanoma Strategy was undertaken by the Ulster Cancer Foundation on behalf of the DHSSPS. The review recognised that progress made on delivering the strategy was a direct result of dedicated work carried out by the implementation group, and that a number of successful outputs/outcomes had been achieved. It recommended the establishment of an inter-sectoral working group to develop a new 10 year strategy. The Council was represented on this working group.

Belfast City Council's work to tackle skin cancer.

Belfast City Council, in recognition of its overall purpose, which is to improve quality of life now and for future generations, has been at the forefront of action to tackle skin cancer. It has been represented on the Melanoma Strategy Implementation Group since its inception and has been an active member. The main work of the Council has been in relation to the dangers associated with the use of sunbeds. Sunbeds are now classified by the International Agency for Research

on Cancer as being in the highest cancer risk category, i.e. 'carcinogenic to humans'. In response to the health risks posed by sun bed use, in November 2003, the Council agreed to phase out their use in Council premises by 31st December, 2003. Since that date there have been no sunbeds offered for use within Council premises.

Council officers contributed to a survey of sunbed premises in Northern Ireland in 2007 which highlighted numerous health risks and bad practice within the industry. Evidence from this survey was submitted to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) which had been requested by the four UK Departments of Health to provide advice regarding the safety of UV sunbeds in the UK. COMARE's 13th report: 'The health effects and risks arising from exposure to ultraviolet radiation from artificial tanning devices' was published in June 2009. On 19th November, 2009, DHSSPS launched a public consultation on regulation of the sunbed industry in Northern Ireland. Members will be aware that, at its meeting on 18th January 2010, the Committee agreed a response to this consultation which recommended the introduction of very robust controls on the industry including the banning of use by children and young people under 18.

Key Issues

The main focus of the proposed new skin cancer strategy and action plan is on prevention, highlighting also the importance of early detection.

It has been developed to take into account the population as a whole, however, children and young adults and those spending a significant amount of time outdoors, have been identified as requiring particular action. The questions asked within the consultation questionnaire are as follows:

- Do you agree that this Strategy provides strategic direction for the prevention and early detection of skin cancer over the next ten years?
- Are the relevant factors which influence incidence of skin cancer fully covered? (Chapter 1)
- Have all the key factors for people at higher risk of developing skin cancer been identified? (Chapter 2)
- Do you agree with the measures recommended to reduce the risk of skin cancer incidence and aid early detection? (Chapter 4)
- Do you agree with the two key target groups which have been identified, and that they require particular action? (Chapter 5)
- Do you agree with the proposed objectives? (Chapter 5)
- Do you agree that the actions listed against each objective are both appropriate and achievable? (Chapter 6)

The attached draft consultation questionnaire answers "Yes" to all these questions. Objective 2.1 in chapter 6 is to "Bring forward legislation placing controls on sunbed use". It is anticipated that these controls will be enforced by District Councils. As previously stated, at its meeting on 18th January, 2010, the Committee agreed a response to the public consultation on these controls.

Resource Implications

It is anticipated that District councils will be responsible for enforcement of any new legislation regulating the sunbed industry in Northern Ireland. Belfast City Council will be able to enforce the new controls within existing resources as part of current and future inspection programmes within the Environmental Health Service.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee welcomes the proposed strategy and action plan and agrees the consultation questionnaire (appendix 2).

Decision Tracking

The response should be forwarded to DHSSPS to arrive no later than the closing date/time - 5pm on Friday 24th December.

A cover letter outlining the key role the Council has played to date, from the information referred to in the background to this report, in tackling this problem will be drafted to accompany the response following Council approval in December.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2010 – 2020

Appendix 2 - Proposed Council response to the consultation document