

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

19 JANUARY 2024

QUESTION No. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No 36

David Maynerd to ask the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board:

Regulation of Hairdressers

Why is it that Hairdressers are unregulated?

When, if hairdressers don't sterilize their equipment carefully after each use, dangerous scalp conditions can be passed on to the next customer. I have noticed over several years that my scalp seems to be sensitive and after a visit to the hairdresser I will nearly always get an itchy scalp, this turns to scabs forming on my scalp and when scratched cause small open wounds. These generally clear up in 6 to 8 weeks with daily use of Head and shoulders shampoo. But the cycle is repeated after my next haircut. Recently I discussed this with my hairdresser and he very kindly started cleaning and disinfecting all his tools before starting to cut my hair. This has drastically reduced the incidence of my problem. But a few months ago we were chatting I noticed that he had not remembered to clean all the his tools and after that visit almost immediately I had an itchy scalp and 3 or 4 bad sores developed. A few days ago I went back and mentioned that last visit and he carefully cleaned all his tools before starting and a few days later my scalp seems fine. I think most mens hairdressers just leave their combs in some disinfectant over night but this is not good enough. If a customer suffers from Dandruff, Psoriasis, eczema and many other hair problems they can easily pass this condition to the next customers through combs, electric cutters, scissors etc. not being sterilised before the next customer. Of course it may not be practical to soak all tools each time but they could be rinsed and sprayed each time ... it only takes a minute and or they can have two sets of combs etc one sterilising and one in use. As I understand it, talking to a new hairdresser in Brecon recently, a town I often visit, anyone can start a hairdressing business and there are no checks or qualifications asked for or made. If this is true, this is a dangerous health loophole which could easily be addressed.

REPLY by the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

It is a requirement for hairdressers and barbers to register with Reading Borough Council's Environmental Health team who will monitor businesses to ensure that they achieve a standard of health and safety practice that minimises risk to their customers.

Hairdressers and Barbers must demonstrate compliance in the following two areas:

1. Maintain a clean and hygienic environment.
2. Decontaminate equipment appropriately.

The Hair and Beauty Industry Authority (HABIA) also sets standards for training and qualifications in the hair and beauty sector via the National Occupational Standards, these include hygiene but their adoption and implementation into local practice will vary. Hairdressers and barbers must also adhere to consumer protection legislation. They are subject to the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

To attain compliance with these regulations, hairdressers and barbers are expected to carry out risk assessments, ensure staff are adequately trained and have an up-to-date Health and Safety policy in place. The salon owner has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of staff and service users.

The council recognises these legal duties are important and will carry out reactive visits following a concern being raised or complaint being logged. Unfortunately, we are not able to conduct proactive visits due to a lack of resources. However, members of the public are invited to log their concerns with our consumer protection department by emailing consumer.protection@reading.gov.uk

It should also be noted that many hairdressers and barbers take the health aspect of their work seriously and there are several examples of excellent health promoting practice. For example, The Lions Barbers Collective which trains hairdressers and barbers to have connected conversations with their male clients to help prevent the risk of suicidal ideation and suicide amongst men.