

Using our brains to save and improve the lives of workers

A close-up photograph of a person's arm and hand. The arm is covered in a large, intricate tattoo of a dragon or dragon-like creature. The tattoo features a green eye with a black pupil, surrounded by red and purple scales. The hand is positioned with fingers spread, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

# Provision of Operator Guidance for Body Piercers, Tattooists and Micropigmentation Practitioners

## The Client

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council utilising funding made available via the HSE:LA Partnership Programme.

## The Problem

Local Authority Circulars (LACs) that offer written advice on body piercing, permanent tattooing and micropigmentation have been available for several years via the HSE Web site.

Although these are open documents, they are primarily designed for use by enforcement officers and can be too technical and detailed for other audiences, such as the special treatment operators (i.e. duty holders) themselves. Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) recently identified a need for more straightforward written advice, specifically for the duty holders in their own council area. Such guidance would provide essential information for businesses, to assist them in setting up new premises or in maintaining existing businesses to a high standard.



## What we did

It was acknowledged that separate advice documents would be required for the different special treatment topic areas. In particular, micropigmentation practitioners and tattooists see their sectors as quite distinct. With this in mind, HSL developed the new material with the objective of providing a visually interesting and accessible format that was not overly technical. Although much of the advice content was sourced from existing LAC guidance, which had already been through prior consultation, HSL performed additional consultation for the new documents to ensure that the revised content remained accurate and up to date. The consultation process involved discussions with LA enforcement officers, The Tattooing and Piercing Industry Union, medical staff, the Health Protection Agency, HABIA (a government appointed standards setting body) and the Department of Health. Once finalised, the advice documents (which cover body piercing, tattooing and micropigmentation) were presented to Calderdale MBC.

Since finalisation of the material it has been realised that it would be equally useful to a wider audience, including business operators, members of the public and enforcement officers. It has therefore agreed that all Local Authorities should be available to download the material from HEx (extranet off HSE's website for Health and Safety enforcing authorities and their officers).

## Outcome/Benefits

The advice booklets were made available as three separate documents, to cover the three main treatments described above. These documents include information on requirements for safe, clean premises, legal issues, waste disposal, infection control, aftercare advice and an at a glance checklist. Appendices within each document also present examples of how a medical history questionnaire, consent form and aftercare advice sheet might be prepared for each of the three treatment areas - these can be used as templates and copied if necessary. The electronic versions of the documents are now available on the Calderdale MBC web site.

Enforcement officer and operator feedback on the advice booklets has been extremely positive, and interest in the documents remains high. A limited run of A5 booklets has quickly been exhausted and HSL is responding to requests for additional copies. These will be circulated widely and will act as a useful reference for businesses as they plan and carry out their treatments.