

Government sees the light as tan ban is passed for under-18s

Meanwhile industry calls for tighter regulations

The House of Lords has passed a new law banning under-18s from using sunbeds in commercial outlets in England and Wales. The Sunbeds (Regulation) Bill, set to come into force in April '11, will give local authorities the power to inspect premises and penalise non-compliance with fines of up to £20,000.

The Tanning Shop, one of the UK's largest tanning chains, backs the Bill and already prohibits under-18s from using its sunbeds. "We welcome the new regulation, notwithstanding we've already implemented an under-18s ban of our own accord," says owner Adam Mooney. "We see this as a responsible initiative from the industry and government in ensuring a responsible approach to tanning." To impose the ban, the company's outlets keep records of all clients - insisting on proof of age at the initial consultation - and regulate all visits using a biometric fingerprint reading.

To aid sunbed operators, salon management software systems, such as Solartrack (Solartrack.co.uk), offer industry-specific security features. Details for each customer can be recorded - including their age, skin type and a headshot. Moreover, a disclaimer form detailing associated health

risks and care advice can be printed for clients to sign. The Sunbed Association (ISA) meanwhile has slammed the new Bill as a sham, arguing that it was a missed chance to impose tighter regulations.

Chairman Gary Ljpmann maintains that cheap equipment hire for home tanning should also be outlawed for minors, and that a ban on unmanned salons should be upgraded to a obligation for properly trained staff to manage client sessions at all times. "The purchase or hire of sunbeds by under-18s for use at home will inevitably thrive and as it stands, a cleaner on the premises could be interpreted as staff," he comments.

Mooney agrees with tougher laws and would also like to see additional legislation on restricting the UV output of all sunbeds so they are 0.3 euronorm compliant. "This ultimately restricts UV output, so it is no stronger than the midday Mediterranean sun, eradicating the argument that sunbeds are 15 times stronger," he says. "Dispelling myths of this sort would be highly beneficial to our industry and enforce a greater sense of trust between salons and their customers."