

Get it Straight

RoSPA's 2014 National Home Safety Congress

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Background

There is evidence that the number of hair straighteners burns among children has doubled in recent years and they now account for nearly one in ten burns¹. The plates on hair straighteners are so hot that they often cause serious burns and scarring – in some cases, surgery is needed.

Local Picture

A recent audit undertaken by Alder Hey found that on average, 40 children a year are treated following severe burns by hair straighteners. Almost all of these burns were as a result of children touching hair straighteners belonging to a family member at home, usually the mother. Most of the children were between one and three years old, and only three were over ten years old (Grady, L (2011) Hair Straightener Burns Report Alder Hey)

Aim

The aim of the campaign is to reduce the risk of burns to young children with hair straighteners. The objectives were to raise awareness of the dangers of hair straighteners to children and to promote safe use of hair straighteners.

Actions undertaken

A post-card sized leaflet with a health warning message was designed and distributed along with thermal pouches for hair straighteners. Post-cards were also sent electronically to schools, nurseries, and children's centres for printing on site and displaying on boards.

Managers of Sefton's children's centres were contacted and invited to an awareness-raising session. A training session in home safety was also held prior to the launch; this included an education session on the hazards of hair straighteners.

The campaign was launched in April 2014 with a press release. Promotional materials were sent to children's centres for dissemination. Practitioners (e.g. children centres worker and family development workers) distributed the thermal wraps and gave home safety advice using a common crib-sheet to ensure consistency. Practitioners were asked to prioritise families in greatest need as there is strong evidence that compared with children from the least deprived; children from the most deprived areas are at higher risk of accidental injuries². Families who received the thermal pouches were asked to fill in an evaluation form.

Results

The feedback on the campaign found that of the 161 responders, 145 (90%) were already aware of the hazards of hair straighteners prior to the campaign. Of the 123 responders, 52 (42%) knew of a child or had a child who had been burnt by a hair straighteners. In sum, 128 (81.6 %) people have said they would now change the way they use and store hair straighteners.

Discussion

It would appear that most people (90%) knew of the hazards of hair straighteners. However, it would also appear that most people did not appreciate the full extent of the hazards of hair straighteners as over 81% of the responders have now said they will change the way they would use and store hair straighteners. Thus, we can conclude that the campaign has been successful in changing people's perceptions and behaviour.

A key attribute to success was having staff from the children centres and other frontline staff promoting and supporting the campaign.



Proportion of people who have changed how they store and use hair straighteners Sefton n: 158

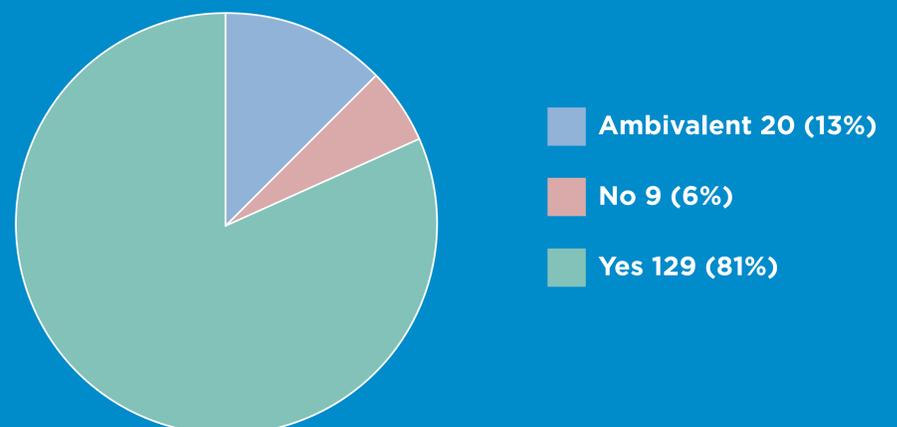


Figure 1: Use and storage of Hair Straighteners

¹ Department for Trade and Industry. 24th (final) Report of the Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance system www.hassandlass.org.uk/reports/2000_2002.pdf

² Hippisley-Cox J, Groom C, Kendrick D, et al. Cross sectional survey of socioeconomic variations in severity and mechanism of childhood injuries in Trent 1992-7. *BMJ*, 2002;324:1132-1134.