THE SLOAN CLINICS

BODY PIERCING AGE, CONSENT & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

SAFE. CLEAN. FOR YOU.

Policy owner: Dr Emma Sloan **Version:** 1.1 **Date:** November 2026
Review: November 2027 **Status:** Clinic policy

1. Introduction

The Sloan Clinics is an established GP clinic based in Seaford, East Sussex. Our professional body piercing service prioritises clinical safety, infection prevention, informed consent and safeguarding. Training commenced in March 2026 and includes a Diploma in Body Piercing from the British School of Body Piercing. This policy sets out minimum ages, identification, consent and safeguarding standards.

2. Legal and regulatory framework

The Sloan Clinics confirms that its piercing policy was reviewed by Lewes District Council and that registration for its piercing service was granted following that review. The clinic will comply with applicable registration conditions and local byelaws. This does not imply that the council has approved exceptions to the age limits set out below.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, as amended by the Local Government Act 2003: provides a framework for local authority registration of cosmetic piercing practitioners and premises.

Consent and common law: England has no universal statutory minimum age for most cosmetic piercings. Valid consent is essential, with consideration of the child's understanding and wishes. The clinic applies additional age and parental consent safeguards.

Children Act 1989: the clinic considers welfare, safeguarding and parental responsibility. Sexual Offences Act 2003: intimate piercings involving minors may raise additional legal considerations; the clinic independently restricts nipple and genital piercing to adults aged 18+. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: appropriate infection prevention, sharps and equipment procedures apply.

3. Minimum age requirements

Piercing procedure	Minimum age
First earlobe piercing	4 years
Additional earlobe piercing	10 years
Ear cartilage (helix, rook, tragus, conch, industrial etc.)	16 years
Facial (nostril, septum, eyebrow, lip etc.)	16 years
Navel, surface and dermal	16 years
Tongue	18 years
Nipple	18 years
Genital, including VCH	18 years

These are clinic minimum ages, not a guarantee of suitability. No exception will be made solely because a parent gives permission.

4. Children aged 4–15

Only permitted earlobe piercings may be undertaken. A parent or person with parental responsibility must attend throughout. The child's identity and date of birth, the adult's photographic ID and parental responsibility must be verified.

Different surnames may require additional evidence; matching surnames alone do not establish parental responsibility. Medical history and consent forms must be completed.

The child must be willing, understand the procedure in an age-appropriate way and remain sufficiently still. If distressed, unwilling or unable to cooperate safely, the piercing must not proceed. No child will be restrained or forced.

5. Young people aged 16–17

Permitted piercings require photographic ID, written parental consent, verification of the consenting adult's identity and parental responsibility, medical screening and anatomical assessment. A parent need not ordinarily attend; for dermal piercings, parental attendance and photographic ID are required. The clinic's parental consent rule is an additional internal safeguard.

6. Adults aged 18+

Photographic identification confirming age and identity is required, alongside medical screening, informed consent and practitioner assessment.

7. Identification and parental responsibility

Acceptable evidence may include a passport, photographic driving licence or other reliable ID accepted by the clinic. Younger children may require a suitable combination of documents. If parental responsibility is unclear or disputed, or identity cannot be reliably verified, the procedure is deferred. Identification checks are documented; copies are retained only where necessary and justified.

8. Consent and the child's wishes

Consent must be informed, voluntary and documented. The practitioner explains the procedure in age-appropriate language and invites questions. Children and young people must not be pressured. They may withdraw agreement at any point; the procedure stops if they do. Parental consent does not override a child's expressed refusal.

9. Clinical and anatomical suitability

Each client is assessed for anatomical development, tissue integrity, safe jewellery placement, medical conditions, medication, allergies, healing history, ability to tolerate the procedure, aftercare capacity and additional support needs. The practitioner may decline or defer any unsuitable or unsafe procedure.

10. Medical history and risk assessment

The Piercing Medical History & Health Screening Form records relevant conditions, medication, metal/antiseptic/latex/dressing allergies, bleeding risk, diabetes, immunosuppression, skin conditions, scarring, fainting, previous piercing complications and additional needs. Concerns are individually assessed and may warrant deferral.

11. Safeguarding

Staff must be alert to coercion, distress, inconsistent identity information, uncertainty about parental responsibility and other safeguarding concerns. The procedure will be deferred and the clinic's safeguarding processes followed. Concerns are recorded and escalated appropriately.

12. Infection prevention and sterilisation

Initial piercing jewellery is implant-grade titanium. Jewellery and reusable instruments are sterilised on site using the clinic's Type B vacuum autoclave, following validated procedures and manufacturer instructions. Sterile single-use needles are used. Cycle records, equipment checks and jewellery traceability are maintained and linked to individual procedures where appropriate. The practitioner verifies satisfactory processing before use.

13. Aftercare and follow-up

Clients or parents receive written advice on cleaning, healing, restrictions, complications, jewellery changes and follow-up. For spreading redness, increasing pain or swelling, discharge or other concerns, clients should contact The Sloan Clinics promptly for assessment and next steps. Severe symptoms, rapid spread or systemic illness require urgent medical attention rather than waiting for a routine review.

14. Documentation and records

The clinic records identity and date of birth, medical screening, allergies, ID and parental responsibility verification, signed consent, practitioner assessment, piercing site, jewellery specification, sterilisation cycle reference, aftercare provision and any reviews or complications. Records are held under the clinic's confidentiality, data protection and retention policies.

15. Right to decline or defer

A procedure may be refused or postponed where age, identification, consent, safeguarding, medical or anatomical requirements are not met, the client cannot cooperate safely, or the practitioner judges the procedure unsuitable. Reasons are explained sensitively and documented. Client welfare takes priority.

16. Governance and review

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner following changes to law, guidance, council requirements or clinic practice. It should be read with the Piercing Consent & Safety Assessment, Medical History & Health Screening, Aftercare Guide, Infection Prevention Procedures and Safeguarding Policy.

Clinical discretion and Gillick competence: see the final policy footnote on page 4.

Approved by: Dr Emma Sloan **Signature:** _____
Date of approval: _____ **Next review:** November 2027

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POLICY FOOTNOTE · GILLICK COMPETENCE

As a GMC-registered GP, Dr Emma Sloan recognises the principles of Gillick competence and the ability of a young person under 16 to provide valid consent where they demonstrate sufficient maturity and understanding.

In exceptional circumstances, individual requests may be considered on a case-by-case basis following careful assessment of competence, informed consent, clinical suitability and safeguarding considerations. This may include circumstances where refusal could place a young person at greater risk of attempting a piercing themselves or seeking treatment from an unlicensed provider.

Any such assessment would be undertaken in Dr Sloan's professional capacity as a GP, independently of the clinic's routine piercing age policy, but would not override applicable legal requirements, local authority licensing conditions or professional obligations. An assessment does not guarantee that a piercing will be undertaken.

All decisions and their clinical rationale would be documented.

ABSOLUTE AGE RESTRICTION

Absolute age restriction: Nipple and intimate/genital piercings will never be undertaken on anyone under 18 years of age, regardless of Gillick competence, parental consent or individual circumstances. No clinical discretion or exceptions apply.