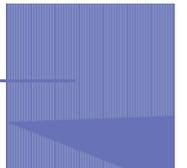




# Regulation of Cosmetic Interventions

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Research among Teenage Girls



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# 1 Management Summary

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## 1.1 Introduction

This research was commissioned as part of a larger research project to inform the review of the regulations covering surgical and non-surgical cosmetic interventions and whether they provide adequate protection for those undergoing them. It focuses on the experiences and views of 24 teenage girls aged 14-17 years and looks at these in greater depth than was possible in the original study. This piece of work was interested in particular, in any interaction girls of this age might have with the industry and whether, as was suggested by the previous research, they might be being targeted by certain providers in their marketing activities.

## 1.2 Key findings

### 1.2.1 Media, celebrities and other influences

The findings suggest that the media being consumed by teenage girls is very similar to that consumed by young adults and even much older women. Girls can become aware of, and interested in, cosmetic interventions from a very early age through the influences of magazines, press, TV programmes and from overheard conversations and the behaviour of others within their social circle to which they are exposed.

The range of magazines and television programmes that feature celebrities and cosmetic interventions is extensive and while individual girls may be avid readers of just one or two magazines and followers of particular programmes, they are very aware of the amount of material and feel that it is increasing. In addition, as would be expected, they are exposed to a range of social and online media that also add to their store of knowledge regarding cosmetic interventions. Some also think that they are spending more time looking at such material and even at this age, these teenagers were aware of most cosmetic interventions.

The focus of their attention are the celebrities, their 'perfect' looks and how these are achieved; speculation about whether they have had a cosmetic procedure is a standard part of the entertainment and even where it is not, the girls themselves may question this. There is an understanding that the use of cosmetic procedures is growing and becoming more widespread, both among celebrities and the population in general.

Cosmetic interventions do permeate the girls' lives although to varying degrees. They are certainly aware that there are salons/ clinics/ places where cosmetic procedures are provided in their area and many have siblings or parents, or friends of them both, who have had one or more procedures and who talk about it. Moreover, several of these teenage girls already had in mind that they would have a cosmetic intervention in the future.

### 1.2.2 Attitudes to cosmetic interventions, motivations and aspirations

For these girls, as with the full sample in the main research, there is recognition that cosmetic interventions, particularly of the less serious, non-surgical type, have become so normalised that girls are often surprised to find that procedures like teeth whitening are classed as cosmetic interventions at all. While cost is a barrier to the more expensive surgical procedures, unsurprisingly at their age, this does not mean that they feel people do not have access to them; it is recognised that many ordinary people desire and manage to find the money to have them and this includes members of their own families as well as friends.

The girls readily admit the pressure regarding their appearance that they feel in their daily lives as they are scrutinised and judged by their peers, and they compare themselves (and others) with the ideal and perfect images presented in the media by celebrities. The pressure to compete with peers as well as an envy of celebrities' appearance and the accompanying lifestyle, combines with increasing awareness of the potential to change the way you look, and the solutions available to do so. In the area of Essex at the centre of the TOWIE phenomenon in particular, most of the girls are contemplating one or more procedures when they are old enough, ranging from non-surgical procedures such as teeth whitening and laser hair removal through to surgery, with breast enlargement particularly in mind.

### 1.2.3 Sources of information

Many of the girls have a knowledge of cosmetic interventions built up over several years. They began as children absorbing pieces of conversation, things they read and programmes they watched in a rather passive way but for some, as they have got older, this has become more of an active interest. The media they consume has not only created the celebrity-focused climate which encourages their aspirations to be 'more

perfect' but it creates awareness that these procedures exist, are available and what it is like to undergo them. While some features (broadcast/print/digital) may give a fairly accurate picture, others based on celebrity experiences often underplay what is involved and say little about the risks.

Some of the girls are making use of websites, subscribing to certain sites, or using sites like Twitter and YouTube to follow particular celebrities and style 'gurus', and keep themselves updated and aware of the latest developments and news. This is a more active interest and several at the older end of the age spectrum are beginning to look in greater depth at procedures. They are also aware that there is widespread advertising of interventions on the internet, YouTube, Facebook, on the tube/train, as well as in the media. While some claim that such adverts have hardly registered with them, it is clear that some campaigns have had a broad impact and that they are aware where to find the ads if they need them. Where pop-ups appear on websites, it is largely assumed that these are random events rather than targeted at them; only some had made the link between their browsing history and the pop-ups they see on their screens.

We did not find any further evidence of texts sent to girls exerting pressure on them to consider procedures once they are 18, except for texts sent to one girl who received updates on laser hair removal offers at a salon she had been to for this procedure. However, there were plentiful examples of targeted emails and vouchers for 'minor' cosmetic procedures from the third party discount providers. The girls were often unsure how these companies would have their email address but some knew that they had signed up on various websites/ at related places (e.g. a spa) and occasionally passed themselves off as an adult. A girl who was very active in finding out about procedures had received many offers and was very happy about feeling on top of all her cosmetic intervention options. She was also aware that cookies on sites she had visited would have had something to do with the electronic attention she was receiving.

#### 1.2.4 Messages conveyed, perceived dangers and suggested safeguards

There was a general acceptance that these days, cosmetic interventions enable people to do something about a body part that they dislike or to strive for greater 'perfection'. The fact that so many celebrities and ordinary people are having them makes them seem part of normal life, no longer something regarded as taboo, very accessible in the sense that there are plenty of providers offering them and discounts available to make

them more affordable. There seems to be, it was felt, little emphasis on the risks involved.

While none of these girls felt pressured by providers to consider procedures, they did sometimes feel that there was awareness on the part of providers that they presented a potential market and the ground was being prepared, with targeted emails in particular and advertising placed in the sorts of magazines that teenage girls read. They could also appreciate the cleverness of some of the campaigns and occasionally bore witness to the subtle ways of influencing them.

A number of girls were uncomfortable with this and felt that something should be done to protect young teens although they were often at a loss to suggest what. This was not surprising as the topic of regulations and possible safeguarding issues were not explored as a preamble. Some of the most positive girls about interventions were also least likely to suggest that safeguards were necessary. The girls' ideas included scheduling programmes which include cosmetic interventions as a central theme or adverts on the topic for times when a family audience would not be expected; banning advertising for interventions on internet sites (such as Facebook and other social media) frequented by children; stopping salons 'reaching out' to people in the street with their promotions; ensuring that adverts/ other information cover the potential downsides of procedures; discouragement by providers of under18s from having cosmetic interventions (in particular surgical procedures), and finally, a school-based campaign to inform young people about the risks of cosmetic interventions and offer an alternative view of what they can do for people.

### 1.3 Conclusions

One of the reasons for including teenage girls in the original research study was because of their apparently increased level of interest in cosmetic interventions. While this study set out to find teenage girls who had interacted with the industry in some way and received communications about interventions, as with the last smaller piece of research, it was not too difficult to find such girls. Their underlying attitudes were on a spectrum from very interested and keen to consider what interventions they might have at some point in the future in their quest for a more 'perfect' body, to a more marginal interest with the focus on procedures such as laser eye surgery and teeth whitening.

On the basis of the findings, we would suggest that the following conclusions might be drawn that might be considered as part of the Review of regulations.

- It is possible that children are being exposed to cosmetic interventions at an early age due to the wide availability of, and their exposure to, TV programmes and magazines that include interventions as part of their core material. As children progress to secondary school, they are even more likely to take up watching some of the programmes as a regular pastime and reading some of the very accessible celebrity and fashion magazines even though they may purport to be aimed at an older audience.
- While the media create awareness of the interventions, set down the standards of perfection that many people strive to meet and promote 'role models' for procedures in the form of celebrities, many girls see their influence as benign and largely a source of entertainment. However, others recognise that the expectations they communicate put unrealistic pressure on young people and feed the greatest pressure of all for teenagers, the judgement of their peers.
- In the earlier research, the powerful influence on adults exerted by people within their extended network who had had procedures was identified. This research suggests that such people also make an impact on young girls and in the same way, the success of their procedure may encourage them to consider one also.
- While this research did not back up the earlier suggestion that there may be providers 'grooming' young girls of 16+ to have procedures when they turn 18, it provides a picture of young girls being confronted by TV programmes, adverts, emails, Tweets, videos and other social media promoting cosmetic interventions and specific providers in different ways. While many of the girls claim to ignore them, some campaigns are clearly making an impact and there has been some limited sampling of the offers.
- As before, it is not clear in all cases whether such communications have arrived as spam or as a result of some action on the part of the girls, however slight. This could be anything from signing up to a service which then passes on one's details, to subscribing to a service that one is particularly interested in, to being presented with pop-ups and similar as a result of cookies on particular websites.

Given the feedback from some of the girls, some have clearly invited the industry, however unwittingly, into their lives.

## 2 Background and Research Method

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### 2.1 Background

This research forms part of a larger study carried out as part of the review of regulations covering cosmetic interventions and whether they provide adequate protection for the patient/customer. While the original study sought the views of a range of members of the general public and practitioners in cosmetic procedures, this piece of research focuses on a sub-set of that sample, teenage girls. Four pairs of friends were interviewed in the earlier work and asked about a range of issues including their own awareness, knowledge and perceptions of a variety of cosmetic procedures, the sources of that knowledge, any awareness/ expectations of the current regulations in place to protect the public and their views on these.

The findings suggested that the cosmetic interventions industry not only permeated the consciousness of these young girls (aged 14-17) through the various media they used and by its presence on the high street, but also to an extent, reached out to them in their daily lives through texts on their mobile phones, email and social media. Given the small size of the sample and uncertainty as to whether such contacts were targeted or simply part of mass marketing, it was felt that the experience and views of teenage girls merited further research in particular with respect to the marketing tactics of the industry. Moreover, this fresh piece of research provided the opportunity to revisit, extend and focus the discussion on attitudes towards cosmetic interventions and the influences on their development.

### 2.2 Research method

Eight interviews were conducted, each with a group of three friends (triads) in the same year at school or FE college. Half of the interviews were held in Stockport and the other half in Waltham Abbey with the girls drawn in from different parts of Manchester and Essex respectively. They were drawn from the school years or equivalent shown in the table on the next page.

In identifying girls to take part in the research we were particularly interested in those who had received information about cosmetic interventions; as emails, on their phones or as advertising on the social media they subscribe to. Girls were identified through a mix of methods including word of mouth and requests to people on research databases

and taken through a recruitment screening questionnaire to check their eligibility (provided in the appendices). They were asked to bring along to the interview print-outs of communications they had received as well as examples of features and advertising about cosmetic interventions that they might look at (letter in appendices).

School year	Number of triads/location
Year 10 (14-15yrs)	1 in Waltham Abbey
Year 11 (15-16yrs)	1 in Waltham Abbey 2 in Stockport
Year 12 (16-17yrs)	1 in Waltham Abbey 2 in Stockport
Year 13 (17yrs)	1 in Waltham Abbey

No quotas were set for socio-economic group or age; the aim was primarily to find girls who had received some form of communication about cosmetic interventions. The girls came from a mix of backgrounds, family composition, attended different types of educational institution and had a variety of ambitions. Two triads were at FE college, the others at schools; their ambitions were various from wanting to become a dancer, to a member of cabin crew with an airline, to going into the law. The research took place in late February 2013.

The discussions lasted between an hour and 1.5 hours and followed a topic guide, a full version of which is provided in the appendices. An abbreviated form of this is provided on the next two pages.

### **Warm-up**

- Famous females that are admired and reasons for this including those chosen primarily for their physical appearance
- Exploration of whether there are particular features that make up what girls of their age might see as the 'ideal' look
- How real is the image of the females they admire (not prompted)

### **Awareness, perceived motivations and personal interest**

- Awareness of, and familiarity with, the range of cosmetic procedures with which the review is concerned
- How common these procedures are, whether particular sorts of people have them, to what extent are they a normal part of everyday life
- Why might people want to have these procedures and if young people are mentioned, their motivations. Do they think these are good reasons for having a procedure?
- How do they feel about it? Can they imagine themselves thinking about having a procedure at some point? Have they thought about it? Why might they want to?

### **Sources of information**

- How did they first become aware of cosmetic procedures and how has that knowledge grown since? Where do they get their information about them now? Firstly asked as an open question, each source is then followed up and the influences explored - peers, older girls, parents, family members, salons on the high street, media, internet, etc.
- In relation to **personal networks**, do the people they know talk about cosmetic procedures – at school, within the family, on Facebook/ Twitter etc., What is discussed including whether those who have had cosmetic procedures talk about them
- the **various media** (magazines, TV, websites etc) are explored in terms of likes/ dislikes, how they got into looking at them, frequency of watching/ reading, perceived target audience etc. The materials that the girls have brought along are also consulted

as part of this

- In relation to **advertising**, where these are found, prominence of particular ads, target audience, likes/ dislikes. In relation to any ads on the **social networking sites** they use, why they think they might appear there
- Any sources that they would look to/trust more/less or which might influence their age group more/less?

### **Messages given about cosmetic procedures**

- Looking across **all the sources of information**, what impression do they give about cosmetic procedures? Unprompted and then prompted on messages about availability, motivation, whether it is a big decision to have a procedure, cost, safety
- What effect might such messages have on themselves and their age group; might it influence or even pressure them into thinking about having a cosmetic procedure?

### **Targeted marketing**

- As relevant, any examples of marketing (letters, emails, texts) are discussed in terms of
  - when received it, frequency, perceptions of why they received it
  - content, perceived purpose
  - reaction to the communications
  - how has it/might it influence them
- Attitudes to people sending such communications to girls of their age?

### **Safeguarding young people**

Explanation of interest in whether members of the public and young people in particular, are sufficiently protected when it comes to cosmetic procedures and discussion of any measures they think could be put in place to protect young people.

## 2.3 Structure of the report

The key findings of the research are brought together with a series of conclusions in the Management Summary (section 1). The main body of the report is made up of the detail of the research findings. This begins (section 3) with an overview of the sorts of influences exerted on teenagers as recounted by themselves; it continues (4) by looking at their attitudes to cosmetic interventions, motivation for considering them and any aspirations they have towards having them. It then looks further (5) at how and where the girls learn about the procedures and how they seek information, including any marketing communications they receive. Finally (6), it focuses on summarising the messages about cosmetic interventions that are received by the girls, any dangers that these represent to young girls and ideas for safeguards that they can suggest.

Quotations extracted from the transcripts made of the interviews have been included to illustrate specific points and have been attributed in terms of the location of the interview and the year group. Where there is more than one triad from a year group, we have differentiated between them in some way (either A and B or college and school).

The findings reported here are qualitative in nature and based on a small sample of teenage girls who were recruited because they were interested in the topic and had received/ were aware of marketing materials. While they represent a good mix of girls and range of levels of interest, care should be taken in generalising to the wider population of teenage girls.

## 3 Celebrities, Media and other Influences

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### 3.1 Introduction

While the girls interviewed for this research may not be representative of all teenage girls in the UK, they do paint a picture of young people surrounded by images that either ‘talk of’ cosmetic interventions or allude to them. In this respect, they are subject to the same influences as their adult counterparts.

In this chapter, we have tried to map out the influences on the girls with respect to cosmetic interventions, as they describe them.

### 3.2 Developing awareness of cosmetic procedures

While some girls were unable to recall a time when they were unaware that people could change their body through cosmetic procedures, others could pinpoint particular sources that had made that first impression. These were chiefly programmes on television, magazines that they had read and other digital and social media they consumed. Essentially they became aware as they began to be exposed to media that was ostensibly aimed at adults yet very accessible and appealing to children. Those with elder sisters were particularly likely to have encountered these influences at an early age (see also 5.2).

As they have grown up, the number and range of relevant programmes and social media have increased markedly and they now feel that they frequently encounter ‘news’ and information that touches on cosmetic procedures. While the girls in Stockport were sometimes more critical of the industry and often preferred to distance themselves from some of the media (they might catch TOWIE if flicking between channels, for example), it was also clear that many of them were consuming some of what was on offer and for many (especially the girls from Essex), the programmes were addictive viewing.

#### 3.2.1 Magazines and other digital media

Celebrity magazines such as OK, Heat, Closer, Look, Star, Bella and More were seen as prime sources of mainly gossip and speculation about the famous and cosmetic procedures, and were seen as extremely influential. They were sometimes mainstays of the girls’ reading and sometimes described as a ‘guilty pleasure’, with girls either

buying them themselves or borrowing their mother's/ sister's/grandmother's copy. They were also often one of the ways into the subject as children.

Some of the girls identified other types of magazine that contained material about cosmetic interventions; these were predominantly fashion focused and took the form of more mainstream titles such as Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Company and Marie Claire, and more upmarket titles such as Elle and Vogue. All were known to carry features about cosmetic procedures including some where the journalist had tried them out herself and reported on them.

The main fare of magazines was seen as coverage of celebrities and if not speculating on whether they have had cosmetic procedures, (often showing before and after shots), portraying them as exemplars of beauty and style. They often presented pictures of such perfection that the girls assumed that even where it was not suggested, it was often likely that they had had procedures.

This coverage was played out too on E News (Entertainment and Celebrity News), YouTube and Twitter and on the short stories on the Daily Mail online. All were felt to be media that drew you in and kept you reading about celebrities, their lives and how they maintained their bodies.

*"I found that if I like someone like Rhianna, I've looked into what she's doing lately, like I've looked at her tweets a lot, I've looked on different websites, just to see what she's been doing lately and like that's how you start. It's not an obsession but you start to like, really like them and become a fan of them." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*"It's such a big thing in the media, even if you look at like, music awards or the Oscars and stuff, they don't even care about the awards, all they care about is focusing on what the women look like, how they are dressed... even in magazines, they are always talking about 'oh look at her, she's got fat, she's got skinny, blah, blah', and that's all it's about. So now it's such a big thing, that's what people focus on all the time." (Year 11, Essex)*

*"It's always in a magazine if someone has just had a boob job or a nose job or something like that." (Year 12, college, Essex)*

Tweet exchanges were described where people discussed whether it was better to do endless squat exercises 'to tone your bum' or whether to have surgery because it was so much easier; tweets from celebrities were also common in which they 'tagged' their surgeons.

In three triads, a recent news item about young girls who had undergone cosmetic procedures with the aim of looking like Jennifer Lopez was raised and scoffed at by some but stories like these were seen as riveting and demonstrated the lengths that ordinary people were prepared to go to.

### 3.2.2 Television programmes

In a similar way, television was seen as offering a mix of programming with a similar aim of promoting celebrities and their lifestyles. These included reality shows that make celebrities of people based on their looks and lifestyle (TOWIE, Keeping Up with the Kardashians, Made in Chelsea, Geordie Shore, Jersey Shore, the Real Housewives of Orange County and the Real Housewives of Beverly Hills), 'makeover' programmes (Extreme Makeovers, Ten Years Younger, Supersize vs Superskinny) and those that focus on the state of peoples' bodies (Embarrassing Bodies). These and numerous other pieces of entertainment including Ice loves Coco, The Hills, Desperate Housewives were also seen as offering glimpses of characters contemplating and having procedures or those appearing in them were known to have had them.

*"And you can tell also by not only their faces, obviously their bodies, the curves, you can tell sometimes they've have had treatment for boobs and bums, boob jobs and stuff like that, you can tell they are fake, but they also do look amazing so ..."* (Year 13, Essex)

*"I'd say from TV. I think I was quite young, I used to watch something with Pamela Anderson on the TV and you could obviously tell that she'd had... I remember watching that and because she had such a massive boob job it was fairly obvious and .... seeing actors and sort of knowing that they'd had work done and hearing about like in magazines, what they'd had done and things like that."* (Year 12, school, Stockport)

A new recruit to EastEnders was thought by one group of girls to have been a poor choice by the BBC because she is known to have had several procedures but on further thought, she was perhaps felt to fit the character portrayed. The friends were concerned that she might draw cosmetic procedures to the attention of a family audience

*"I think it's really bad because when she is talking and her mouth doesn't close, it only takes a child to pick up on it or ..."*

*... Well last night when it was on, I watch it downstairs with all of us, and my little brother went 'oh, look at the state of her lips'. That was the first thing when she came on to the screen, that was the first thing out of his mouth. And it's because you can't miss it."* (Year 12, school, Stockport)

Some of the girls in Stockport were more dismissive of the reality TV programmes but familiar enough with them to know that some of those taking part had had cosmetic surgery.

*“I don’t know how I know this but two of them, they had a couple of nose jobs...*

*... Made in Chelsea, someone had a breast reduction, yes, again I didn’t think of that as being weird, I don’t know why.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

*“Like in Waterloo Road they definitely had...*

*... In Glee, Rachel was going to have a nose job...*

*... and then one of the characters supposedly had one...*

*... one had a boob job as well.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

Some felt that the number of programmes available and the number that they watch have grown markedly so that their exposure to cosmetic interventions has steadily increased. In addition, and in Essex in particular, there was a sense that if it is shown on television, it must be true/real; the fact that TOWIE is both local and features normal people rather than celebrities was also seen as making them seem more accessible.

*“Have you watched TOWIE, they have literally got most of them things on that page and you can actually see them get it done. I’ve seen them get teeth whitening, ‘Botox’, boobs. I love TOWIE, it’s one of my favourite programmes, I think it’s so funny....*

*... I think they are (an influence) because they are not even celebrities. They are like us, they live round the corner from us. Like my sister knows some of them and that, it’s just like normal people, so I think that influences you a lot because you know they are just regular people like your older brothers and sisters really.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

### 3.2.3 In their daily lives

The girls were also very aware that even though they might not be conscious of it, evidence of cosmetic procedures could be found all around them; in the salons offering procedures in the high street, in advertising and through people they knew directly or indirectly who were thinking about having a procedure or had had one.

As in the main research, the girls felt they were increasingly aware of cosmetic interventions on the high street. For example, a laser hair removal clinic opening next to a corner shop, sandwich boards advertising cosmetic procedures all over the high street where one triad live (Brentwood), tours of shops/clinics/salons owned by the

people in TOWIE, all of which have endorsements for different providers of cosmetic procedures on display.

*“It’s casual, it’s just like a casual thing. Before, I’d think you’d have to go somewhere or have lots of money to do that. Yeah, just find somewhere proper far to get something done like that but that is just like round the corner. It makes it seem like everyone is doing it, like an everyday thing.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“[Provider name] is a big one because all of the TOWIE advertise for it, they all advertise it and I’ve seen like I said, the big stands. I work in Brentwood and you have stands with them, one on one side, one on the other, saying, ‘I had this done, I had that done.’” (Year 13, Essex)*

In Stockport, one of the groups of girls identified a salon with its entrance next to a branch of McDonalds; it has a rack outside for leaflets promoting the various procedures on offer, showing before and after shots and she felt it inappropriate that children should be picking these up. A respondent also told of enquiring about teeth whitening in a salon and being given information even though she was clearly still at school.

*“I said ‘how much is your teeth whitening?’ and they were like ‘here’s a leaflet’ and I was actually like still in school at that age and I could walk in there and walk through people getting ‘Botox’, go in, ask how much it is, they didn’t ask me about my age.” (Year 12, Stockport)*

One girl suggested people are becoming less self-conscious about hiding their beauty interventions which she regarded as part of the same spectrum as cosmetic interventions.

*“I remember finishing primary school one day and there was actually a lady in the playground with tissue over her eyebrows because she’d had her eyebrows tattooed like half an hour before she came to pick her children up. It was just, it was strange to look at, like it wasn’t normal, but now it is quite normal to get your eyebrows tattooed on because it’s easier for you like ...*

*... Yeah, you don’t have to do your eyebrows every day...*

*... And they are walking around with the big rollers in their hair, that’s become really popular.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

The girls in Stockport described how advertising for cosmetic procedures could reach into the lives of school children; they gave an example of large ads on the back of school buses for a salon showing a complete list of all the treatments they offer, and a commercial gym used by their school which advertises various procedures.

*“We used to go to the [name of chain of fitness centres] with PE and they’d always be advertising like the microdermabrasion and definitely the laser hair removal and different things like that...”*

*... That was a private gym but that was really promoting 'change yourself', that was really all about the image. I was really shocked because you know usually it's all about the fitness." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

### 3.3 Celebrities as the 'ideal'

The majority of the girls were able to talk with ease and at length about their fascination with celebrities and about particular individuals whom they admired; a large part of such admiration was attributed to their appearance and what their looks had achieved for them. A recurring theme in talking about such objects of admiration was how they were 'perfect' or how they strived to be 'perfect' or 'flawless'.

*"Their features like, they are all like perfect" (Year 10, Essex)*

*"She has the flat stomach, the big bum, whatever like, you know .. the legs, she has nice normal sized boobs, they are not too big and like, she has a nice face. She has the perfect like ...*

*And she dresses nice, her make up is nice, it's not too much." (Year 11, Essex)*

*"They've got the perfect body, the perfect hair, the perfect face, like everything needs to full into place..."*

*... You want to be like that." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

When asked how they felt celebrities attained such perfection, it was widely recognised that some had had some form of cosmetic procedure even if only of a minor nature like teeth whitening while some had undergone many procedures. It was suggested that whereas many talented women had interventions in order to cement their celebrity/ 'make them easier on the eye', it was also the case that ordinary people were able to attain celebrity and enviable lifestyles through 'transforming' themselves by having and promoting their cosmetic interventions. This was very appealing for some girls who saw this as a route to fame and a glamorous lifestyle. Most famous in this respect were Katie Price, the Kardashians and the TOWIE characters but it was also pointed out that other women continue to try and emulate their example.

*"Also, from programmes like TOWIE, because that is really close to us, it makes us even more want to ... 'oh I can be like that'." (Year 10, Essex)*

*"I know there was a girl on Twitter that wasn't actually famous and she's like become Twitter famous in a kind of way. Like she holds club nights and stuff like that now, all over the UK and that was all through, she had a boob job and started having pictures with her breasts out and she got all these followers, all these lads, which now will go anywhere to see her in a club..."*

*... To see her in the flesh." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“It’s the same with Katie Price, she was a no one until she had her breasts done and then she was on Page 3. They have all come from nobodies and by having cosmetic surgery they have become something.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

One girl, an admirer of Megan Fox for her beauty and glamour, recounted how she had been surprised to discover that she used to look very different and had changed her appearance through cosmetic interventions – this did not diminish her admiration however.

*“So this is my idol, Megan Fox. And obviously, I know she’s obviously had loads of plastic surgery but I actually find it’s amazing to look at the pictures of her before and after. It’s something that shocks me but it’s not something that really upsets me.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

The girls were also very aware of the artificiality of many of the images they are presented with in magazine photographs i.e through digital manipulation but they still find them desirable and seem to think that they are fundamentally a reflection of how that person looks. While some appeared to be very savvy about how shots are carefully selected to be suggestive of before and after cosmetic procedures, for example, others do not seem to understand how images are manipulated – for example, one triad thought that an image of Rhianna had definitely not been airbrushed and she was naturally flawless because you could see lines on the forehead of Chris Brown next to her. Some also pointed out that because they probably only see edited images, the impression given is that this is how those celebrities look all the time.

*“You know like half of those have probably been photo-shopped but I think, when you look at it, you don’t think that, you think, ‘wow, they look so beautiful’ yeah. I don’t think you think about that, I think you just think they look nice because you see them like that all the time.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“I don’t necessarily look at whether it’s real or not, I just know that I like it. I don’t necessarily look and think ‘wow she’s had work’, I just think ‘wow she looks good’. I don’t actually consider whether it’s, if it’s fake or not, that’s what she’s got.” (Year 13, Essex)*

## 4 Attitudes to cosmetic interventions, motivations and aspirations

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### 4.1 Introduction

In this section, we consider the girls' views on the impact that the multitude of messages about cosmetic procedures has on them; how they view such procedures and whether they anticipate wanting or having them in the future.

### 4.2 Awareness of procedures and how common they are

The procedures of which these girls felt most aware and knew most about were 'boob jobs' (reduction and enlargement), 'Botox', nose jobs, tummy tucks, liposuction, teeth whitening and laser hair removal. They were also aware of fillers and bum implants (rather than 'dermal fillers').

In terms of how common these procedures were felt to be, a distinction was drawn between procedures that were seen as fairly minor, widely available and less costly such as teeth whitening and 'Botox', and the higher price procedures involving surgery. There was some surprise that teeth whitening was classed as a cosmetic procedure at all because of its ubiquity and the fact that they knew so many people who had had it done or were doing it themselves and moreover, they could see that they could easily do it themselves.

*"Plastic surgery or cosmetic surgery is really, really common..."*

*... Yeah...*

*... They've introduced it into like normal sun bed shops, like you can get your teeth whitening, I think some of them do 'Botox'...*

*... Yeah you can have 'Botox' I was just going to say, in tanning studios." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*"I think things like teeth whitening and laser hair removal and laser eye surgery, they don't even seem to be particularly extreme things anymore. I think they just become normal." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

Based on the cost of having many of the procedures, they suggested that it was 'people who could afford them' who had them – including, of course, celebrities. However, this did not mean that they did not know people who had had one or more procedures; several counted older sisters as well as friends of their family in this number and in

Essex, in particular, the girls were very aware that many ordinary women in the area were having procedures, not only the TOWIE celebrities.

*“No it’s available to everyone. Even my sister’s mates who are 23 have had boob jobs and stuff. I don’t know where they find the money for it but then that makes me think, ‘oh look, I can actually get a boob job.’ It makes me realise that I can, if I get a good job, I can actually get it done, so then I think, ‘well, I might as well get it done because if they can get it, they’ve got the money to get it, I should be able to conjure up the money to get it as well.’ It makes me want it more if you know what I mean.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“‘Botox’, everyone seems to be getting it now, no matter whether you are rich or poor, so it can’t be that bad because you’ll see it in all the magazines and on the TV and then one time I was round my mate’s house and her mum was talking about it, that her cousin had just bought her like a ‘Botox’ thing for her birthday, like you go to the spa and you can have ‘Botox’ done if you want it done, to get rid of your crow lines, your crows feet. They were talking about that like, she paid for her and four other women to go and get it done if they wanted it done. So like a lot of people just seem to be getting it done, just because you can really.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

The girls more generally, were also aware that attitudes to procedures have changed over the last few years and are likely to continue to change.

*“I remember when it wasn’t that popular and my sister’s friend’s mum was having ‘Botox’ regularly and it wasn’t popular then and my mum was disgusted because she was having it done. My mum said ‘why would you want to change the way you look, why would you want to make your face look tighter when you are meant to grow old? But it just wasn’t right at the time. But now it’s normal.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

### 4.3 Perceived motivation

A range of motivations were ascribed to people, in general, who had or were thinking of having cosmetic procedures:

- Medical need such as a breast reduction because of back pain, laser eye surgery for poor eyesight
- A desire to feel better and more confident about your body by improving a body feature that you dislike (and about which others might have made you self conscious) – this could help with improving your life chances

*“Self confidence is key to, you know, getting a good job and doing well for yourself because if you’re not confident, how are you ever going to leave the house? So, to get things done you need to have some sort of self confidence. You need to like...look good and feel good about yourself and I think if the only way you can feel like that is surgery then...you know, go for it. Not in a like...’do*

*whatever you want to your body' but if you just want to fix something that you've been told's wrong, then fix it." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

- A desire to look younger in women in their 30's and older or, after having children when they may want to regain their former shape

*"And I think 'Botox' as well, that's become really common in like women in their late thirties, early forties that have had children and are not really having any more now and they want to still be in their youth, kind of thing. They feel that they are getting old ... Yeah and they are tanning all the time and things like that and they are thinking, 'do you know what, my skin is starting to look a bit haggard and things like that and they know that their children, they look at their children and think, that are like 17/18 and they think, 'oh she's really pretty, I'd love to still be young like that' and so I think late thirties, early forties, 'Botox' is really, really big." (Year 12, Stockport)*

- Aspiring to be 'perfect', either in the mould of a celebrity that is widely admired, or simply to be flawless like the images they see around them in the media
- Most extreme, those who attempt to emulate and develop a celebrity lifestyle based on how they look.

From their own perspective and that of teenage girls in general, all the girls spontaneously talked about feeling insecure about their bodies and many spoke of wanting to improve some part of themselves in order to enhance their confidence. This might be in small ways currently but some could envisage considering a cosmetic procedure in the future. While this was on occasion to improve a specific feature such as a much disliked nose, there were a few girls, particularly in Essex, who were excited by the prospect of being able to change their body in a quest for perfection.

*"Everyone wants to be like a celebrity so they'll just get, that's what they get done, like them people that try and be perfect, that's how they do it..."*

*... or people always want to look better than someone else, or something like that, because there's so much stress about someone's appearance, the way they look." (Year 11, Essex)*

Across the triads the most intense pressure on teenagers to 'look good' was felt to come from oneself and one's peer group, the people at school and college with whom they spent so much of their lives. The body ideal represented by celebrities was seen as a strong influence, a template against which you and others measure each other, but the most keenly felt pressure seemed to come in the form of casual conversation - the topics that are discussed, the comparisons that are made, the off the cuff remarks that

hurt or the deliberate jibes that hit home. All were acutely aware that just as they commented on the appearance of other girls, others were likely to talk about them. They were also aware that the boys they knew casually passed judgement on girls and they were worried about what they said about them in their absence. Some talked about how girls might be bullied about some aspect of their appearance.

*“The girls that I go round with, always comment on how the boys speak, because like our friends will comment on other girls, like other girl’s figures like ‘oh look at her, look at her, look at her bum’ or whatever and then it makes us think like ‘what do they say about us’?”*

***I mean how do you feel about that?***

*It’s not nice because I hate like, with like any boys at all, and they will comment on someone else, it makes you like, say you are in town and like because I have a few mates which are boys, they go ‘oh she looks well nice in that, oh her bum, or her boobs look well good’ and it’s like, it’s always the girls that they comment on that have the really low cut tops and massive push-up bras and dead tight shorts.*

*It’s pressure.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“I don’t think maybe boys realise how much pressure girls are under. I think they probably do it as a bit of a joke but don’t realise how much it can affect girls.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

*“I think it’s only pressure when like in your groups and like our age, I think it’s a lot of pressure at our age. Because everyone is always like, at this age you get judged the most, like in secondary school, you will get judged.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

They also spoke of how such scrutiny and mutual judgement was associated with the competition to look better or attract more attention than your peers; prettier girls were often seen as more popular and gained more attention from boys.

*“Everyone wants to look nice, everyone wants to look better than someone else and because there’s so much, nowadays you don’t, people don’t date and stuff like that for their personalities. It’s the way they look, how they can show off what they have and stuff like that. So if you’re ugly and things like that, you’re not really going to get that much attention, but if you can fix it, and nowadays you can basically fix everything, so people do that. Yeah because back in the day, you just had to deal with what you have and now people’s waste their money and everything, they can just to get stuff done, to make themselves look better.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“There is always someone prettier than you so it’s like a competition really....and you are always looking at these skinny celebrities like.....*

*... I think that makes it worse for like girls when they put celebrities because people then, that’s what boys find attractive and when you are like the girl, just*

*like a normal girl, you want to be like them to be found attractive and to like feel pretty as well.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

At the moment, they might take small steps to conform to what is expected in their peer group; make-up, tanning, having their hair done but many girls, particularly though not exclusively, in Essex, can see themselves going further (see 4.6).

*“I feel like now if I go out on a weekend I can’t go out without fake tan...*

*... Yeah without wearing fake tan.*

*... I don’t think pale is a good image like ...*

*... Yeah but like when you go out, if you are pale, you are just not seen in the same kind of way...*

*... It’s since The Only Way is Essex I think, since that was put on telly, the Essex girls from the show were stereotypes, a bit orange and since then, girls have gone over the top with fake tan and it’s like they copy them, it’s what a TV programme can do to you.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

#### 4.4 The influence of celebrity

While a few girls distanced themselves from trying to emulate celebrities they admire, others readily acknowledged the powerful influence of such images of widely applauded perfection on their own outlook and perceptions of themselves. Such representations helped create dissatisfaction with one’s appearance while also offering the solution to achieve a more desirable result. They wished to imitate the look and aspired to having the attention and lifestyle that came with it. Where celebrity had been achieved by somebody from an ordinary background changing her body, this sometimes made the dream even more apparently attainable.

*“People want to change themselves, nobody is happy, nobody seems to be happy with the way they are born, everybody sees all these celebrities in the media and things like that and that’s what they want. Like girls that aren’t even old enough to even have cosmetic surgery say, ‘oh when I’m 18 I want this done and I want that done’, just because of the way it’s been presented in the media or come across, because of the way celebrities look...*

***And when you say that, is that how you feel too?***

*Yeah.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“Twitter. E-news. They have things on there all the time about what the celebrities are getting done, what’s happening in their lives and it comes up and you’re like, ‘oh I would like to get that done and you see pictures of then and now and on YouTube, there’s celebrities before they’ve had work and stuff like that*

*and you look at them and think 'oh my god I have that on my face, I want to get that done'." (Year 10, Essex)*

*"It's like that's what you should be like really. It's kind of like... because you see everybody on the TV and everything and it's kind of like, 'this is the ideal look and it's what you have to aspire to' ...well not everybody, but I think that's what some people feel sometimes." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*"I think it's the way it is because of how we have been brought up, like I said before, how we've been brought up into it, the media like, I don't think we'll ever stop comparing ourselves to other people because it's constantly there. We read something, it's there, watch TV and it's there, internet, it's there, everywhere.... I will waste time just looking at pictures of people that I want to look like and if I see a picture of someone that I really like, it can stick in my head and it will ... it does have a huge affect on people because it's there and you want to aspire to being someone like that." (Year 13, Essex)*

*"I think everyone's got a different image of perfect ... So we all just aim for it but some have more restrictions, they stop it more than others. I think Jordan, Katie Price, her idea of perfect is obviously to go to them extremes to change herself whereas I'm not that prepared to do something like that but I'd still go far." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

*"Because it's so public ...it's endorsed so much by these magazines to go and you know, 'you should look like this person', 'this person's perfect'." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

It was also widely noted that the pressure to conform in this way was coming earlier in girls' lives both in terms of when the pressure to wear make up/think about your appearance starts and because celebrities are getting younger, which makes them think about wanting to be like them at a younger age.

#### 4.5 Influence of people who have had procedures

The original research identified the strong influence of people in one's circle who had had procedures in both creating an impression that they are a normal part of life and in providing examples of successful outcomes. Among the Essex girls, an example was seen of this in the girls who were keen to copy their friend in having laser hair removal. However, there were numerous other examples involving family members; one girl (aged 14) had accompanied her sister (aged 26) to a consultation in central London about her prospective breast enlargement. She and her friends think the results are *'really nice and that it suits her to have bigger boobs'*. Another girl had seen her elder sister looking at teeth whitening websites because she wants to get her teeth whitened and the girl now thinks that if it looks nice on her sister, she might do the same.

In Essex, it was also clear that the influence of other people who had had work done had become more pronounced by Years 12 and 13. By this age, most girls knew or knew of, a number of people who had undergone a procedure and they thought this was a definite influence on them. Among the Year 12s for example, one respondent's aunt had had a boob job, as had another respondent's older sister along with several of her friends, one respondent knew of a girl their age whose father paid for her to have a boob job, they knew a girl who had a nose job in Year 11, their friends' mums went for 'Botox'. Among the Year 13s, one respondent had a friend 6 months older than her who has 'Botox', and they knew several people in their 20s who have had boob jobs and one girl who had one for her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday present. With reference to the PIP scandal, they knew of someone who was really excited because her implants were coming up for replacement and as a result, she had got it done free!

*"If someone is telling you about it, then you hear more about it, then you think about it more and then you want it more. And when you see what they look like, like my sister's mate has just had a 'boob job' and I think they look perfect, it just makes me, now I just want it even more." (Year 12, college, Essex)*

One Year 12 respondent and her sister had offered to get their mum 'Botox' for her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday; while their mother had not been interested, they thought it was better to have something done that worked than waste money on an ongoing basis on expensive creams that clearly did not make any difference.

In Stockport, though smaller in number, many of the girls knew of women who had had procedures (often boob jobs) and were sometimes impressed with the results, feeling that they were fortunate to have had the money to spend on themselves, had achieved something that looked natural and most importantly, succeeded in making them feel better about themselves.

However, when it came to their peers, some girls were more critical, feeling that the girls from school and college who were intending to have procedures done once they were 18 were too young. They were also aware that some had started discussing it with their GP in the hope that they could demonstrate an adverse psychological effect and get it done on the NHS. They were more disapproving of those who encouraged others to have procedures.

*"I've got a friend who's dissatisfied with her nose and even her mum said 'oh you could just, you know, get something... skim the bone down' or something like*

*that. Obviously she wasn't thinking of doing anything so radical but I think just things like that, it does... yeah. I think this just seems to be an easy way out though and it's not necessarily the right way out.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

#### 4.6 Cosmetic procedures as the solution

Some girls put forward the view that cosmetic interventions can offer a way to improve how you look if you have a particular problem or there is an aspect of yourself that is really affecting your confidence/making you unhappy. More generally, such procedures offer a means of creating a more confident, attractive ‘you’ and could greatly improve your life and your prospects.

*“I think I would risk it because I'd be happier. I just want to look good, I want to look like the celebrities really. They look how we want to look, and they've got the life, they've got the money, they've got everything, if we looked like that we ... it is a whole image and it's a life that we don't have, that we might want and a body that we don't have but might want so ...” (Year 13, Essex)*

Some also liked the idea that if they have a problem with their body in the future, there is the possibility of sorting it out.

*“Like when I was younger my main worry about having children was having a saggy belly with stretch-marks because you know like, when you go on holiday and you see like a really saggy belly with stretch-marks and things, it doesn't look appealing and like my mum was really lucky, she had four children and she's not got one stretch-mark and she's a size 8. Through all her pregnancies she never went past a size 10 and I always think like, I hope I'm like that, but I think if I'm not, I can always have surgery to sort it out, it's not as if it's going to be the end of the world. If I put my mind to it, I could save up and sort it out. I think, if it makes you feel better, if it's that common and it makes people say they want to get back in a bikini, why not do it?” (Year 12, Stockport)*

When asked if they talk about cosmetic procedures with their friends, apart from the discussion of the latest edition of their favourite TV programme, it seemed that it was not something that was discussed in depth. Rather, it was something that might be interpolated into one of their frequent discussions about how they look or feel or how they compare to others, along the lines of ‘oh, I want to get a boob job’ or ‘I want to get my teeth whitened’.

*“It comes into conversation quite a lot with all my friends because they say, ‘oh my god yeah, I really want teeth whitening, oh my god yeah I really want blah, blah, blah’ and we all say what we want.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“We don't talk about it everyday, we might talk about something you'd want to get done or something... like laser hair removal, or if you say ‘I just want like to fix something’ or ‘I want to get my teeth whitened’ or something.” (Year 11, Essex).*

*“Most people, they are not really happy with their body so ... they are going to look into it and most of these people are probably friends, so they will start talking about ‘oh I want this’ and you’ll be like, ‘oh what is that?’” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“But I think you do hear about people saying ‘oh yeah, I’m going to get a nose job, I’m going to get a boob job’ or whatever...”*

*...one of my friends has said she wants to get lots of things done. So I mean, that’s just one of my friends, it could be quite a few people.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

There was some sense that for some of the older girls, the idea of having a procedure was coming up frequently and was more concrete; they know more people who have had work done and it is becoming more real as a possibility.

*“My dad and my mum laugh at me today when I say I want a boob job, but I think they are starting to actually like ... because I’m saying it quite a lot, they are actually starting to realise that I actually want one, whereas when I first ever said it, they told me to get a grip and that, pull it together. But where I’ve been saying it for years now, it’s just like becoming like a serious thing that I want.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“It is a lot of pressure I think and I think, for me personally, it has increased as I’ve got older definitely. Even though when I was younger I’d look at a picture and think ‘wow she’s pretty’, now I look at a picture and think ‘right, I want her legs, I want her bum, I want her boobs, I want her tummy’ and like, I go into really big detail about it, it’s not just ‘wow she’s pretty’.” (Year 13, Essex)*

The girls in Essex were noticeably more forthcoming about procedures that they were thinking about, with a particular emphasis on teeth whitening and ‘boob jobs’ (there was a tension here between how skinny they wanted to be and wanting to have bigger breasts). Almost all had in mind that they might have a cosmetic intervention in the future. The Stockport girls mostly seemed to consider procedures in a hypothetical way - if they felt they needed to change a feature they really disliked (rather than striving for ‘perfection’), for example, if they were flat chested, they would seriously consider a boob job. While a number wanted to have their teeth whitened (the final touch after braces are removed), it was a minority of these girls who talked more enthusiastically about having a procedure.

However one Year 11 girl who was very interested in changing several aspects of her appearance (her knees, removal of a scar) said she could not recall a time when she did not feel this way.

*"I don't remember a time where I wasn't aware of being able to change myself. I don't remember a time where there was something that I couldn't change. There's nothing on my body now that I can't change, if I wanted to change something I could just change it..."*

**So have you thought about doing them from an early age?**

*... Yeah but not in like, 'oh I want a boob job' or from like 7 or something, but there's always been stuff... like I think we all have like conscious things but there's always been stuff that I don't like and I want to change. And then becoming aware of procedures I can have that will change it, and thinking, "if I can, why don't I?"* (Year 11A, Stockport)

In contrast, the Essex girls were able to confidently list the procedures they were considering for themselves:

**Year 10:**

- All want to have teeth whitened
- Two girls would like 'boob jobs'; one likes the idea of having big boobs plus she compares herself to her older sister who has bigger boobs than her

*"I already know now that I do want a boob job but that's if like I get a good job because they are obviously expensive...I don't know I just like it, I don't know, I want big boobs. I mean I haven't yet because I'm still young but I just, I like it."* (Year 10, Essex)

Other wishes are for:

- 'Botox' in the future if she gets deep wrinkles like her mum

*"I'm definitely going to get 'Botox' because like my mum does have quite a few wrinkles like here and like up here and sometimes here and I know I'm going to be conscious about it."* (Year 10, Essex)

- 'nose job' because large noses are a feature of her family and she does not like her profile; she also is teased about it by boys at school sometimes.

**Year 11:**

- all think they would like to have laser hair removal to avoid shaving
- 'nose job' because she broke her nose when she was younger and wants to get rid of the bump
- 'boob job' because she doesn't like being flat chested and thinks it would make

her look better in a bikini

#### Year 12:

- all are thinking about having ‘boob jobs’ when they are older and are also interested in using ‘Botox’ to stop you sweating

*“I just don’t like the way my boobs look, that is why I want one, I’ve always wanted a boob job. Yeah for about two years, yeah for about two years I’ve wanted a boob job.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“I would definitely have a boob job, definitely. I think it’s just to be that perfect image and like ... not to be perfect but to be like, just to look nice, to be pretty, to be comfortable in yourself.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

- one girl has tried home teeth whitening strips which she bought on e-bay after being told by her dentist that she had to be 18 to have her teeth whitened – she will have it done professionally then

#### Year 13:

- one girl has had laser hair removal (using a third party discount voucher with her mum) which has made the other two think about also having it, on the basis that they trust it more now that their friend has had it done
- two of the girls are trying home teeth whitening kits, one for the second time and all would like it. One involves using your retainers and the other moulding a gum shield oneself
- one would like a ‘boob job’ and possibly liposuction (she is very slim)
- one would like to have her nose made less ‘wonky’ after she broke it when she was younger
- one girl wears glasses and would like to have laser eye surgery.

*“I think as we mature a bit more, we want to take care of ourselves a bit more, you think of the options you have, for surgical and non-surgical procedures...*

*... When you’ve got the money, that is the only issue for me, is the money. If I was rich, then I’d be on it. I know you’ve got to be 18, so a couple of months time. But I would wait until I was fully developed like, definitely not going to change any more, but there’s quite a lot that I would, if I had the money, I would do. Because I don’t like my body the way it is. Like plainly, I think it could be improved a lot and I think it could, I mean I wouldn’t consider ‘Botox’ now because I’d probably wait until you know, I got older. But there are certain things*

*that I would do because I think if I could improve it, if I had the money to improve it, why not?" (Year 13, Essex)*

#### 4.7 Perceived barriers and risks

The cost of cosmetic procedures (both initial and for maintenance) was seen as the key barrier for many girls to having something (especially cosmetic surgery) done in the future so they liked the fact that this seemed to be coming down as procedures become more available.

*"I always think that the more you see it and the more you think about yourself, that if it wasn't for the money, like if it was free, everybody would be different people. I would have everything I could done..."*

*... Yeah I would...*

*... Just to become this person that like looks like a model, looks famous kind of thing, but because of the money you think that ...*

*... It's not worth it." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*"And it's just like people our age do not have £2000 so we're just going to have to stick to the little Special K [diet]." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

There was some awareness of the risks of different procedures but those who were most focused in their thinking about going ahead at some point in the future tended to play these down. Certainly, for what are seen as everyday, 'normal' procedures (laser hair removal, teeth whitening), there was felt to be minimal risk.

A few talked of the seriousness of having a 'boob job' and the importance of having someone 'good' perform it; this might mean a surgeon who has operated on celebrities. The PIPs scandal was brought up in half the triads as an example of the risks involved in boob jobs and how the women involved were caused great anxiety and might be affected by serious illness.

They were also conscious that they are still growing and that it was not a good idea to intervene while this is still happening; their bodies might change, particularly with regard to breast size and so they needed to wait and see what their final figure was like (although this was less evident by Year 13). Issues were also raised about what happens if you have a 'boob job' and then have children - will you still be able to breastfeed, will your boobs still go saggy?

In terms of why one might choose to have a boob job, the girls sometimes distinguished between something that you might do for yourself and something that you might do to please others.

*“I know a girl a year older than me who has just had a ‘boob job’ and her new boyfriend paid for it and I think that’s ridiculous. She’s going out with an older man and obviously he looks at it as ‘I’ve got a pretty young girlfriend’ whereas she sees it as like, ‘oh like, I love you.’” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“My sister’s friend, her sister had a boob job because her boyfriend was cheating on her and so she felt she needed to change herself to be more attractive ...*

***Ok and how did she feel after it, do you think it worked for her?***

*... I think it improved her confidence but I know it was quite a hard process because I know she was really weak for two weeks and she needed help and I don’t know whether she realised how serious a big deal it was.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

The sister of a girl now regretted having a breast reduction because ‘big boobs’ were now in fashion (although she might only have wanted them reduced to a lesser degree).

*“Well she’s 24 now, she got it when she was about 19. My mum was like, ‘don’t do it, don’t do it, it’s a lot of money, it will be a waste of time and in a few years time you will want your natural boobs back’. She was like ‘no’, but she does actually worry about having had it done now.” (Year 12, Stockport)*

It was also felt that having one procedure could be the beginning of a slippery slope which might lead you to want to make more and more changes. Indeed, some made the connection between treatments that were not on the list of cosmetic procedures but which they regarded as ways of changing your body that could make you more comfortable about going further – these included permanent make-up, tattoos, piercings and tanning including tanning injections.

*“For people who have had it done, I think it’s part of their everyday life and I think say, if we have it done when we are older, it would start being part of our everyday life.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“I was talking about this with someone the other day, it’s like say, if you have something wrong with you and you manage to fix it, it makes you feel good about yourself, so you want to keep fixing like any little thing that’s wrong with you and then you become like obsessed with it.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“I think by the time we get to like 25, it will be the normal thing because like beauty treatments are becoming more normal now. Obviously not as radical but having your nails... like acrylic nails, even though it’s not such a thing at my school, it is something like at my sister’s school that is fairly normal I think. And to be honest, when you get to like... when you get to like fake nails, I think cosmetic*

*procedures like teeth whitening, is just like one level above so that could quite easily escalate into the rest of this list.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“I think also, if you have one thing done then I don’t think it’s going to satisfy you enough to stop, so if you have your boobs done, you are always going to get...*

*... Your face done...*

*... like liposuction and stuff, I think one thing leads you into another because the first thing just won’t satisfy you enough to make you stop.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

All were aware of celebrities who had ‘overdone it’; Michael Jackson and Katie Price were the top of mind examples, but others were mentioned such as Heidi Montag (The Hills/Big Brother), Little Kim (rapper), Pete Burns, Jodie Marsh, Amy Childs (looking ‘really puffy now’). The ideal was to use cosmetic procedures to improve how you look while still looking natural and to avoid crossing a line beyond which people can easily see that you have had work done, and you start to look worse/‘plastic’.

*“Everything on here, it can be good to an extent, but if you do it too much or too less maybe it depends like it can look silly can’t it, it can go wrong.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“I don’t think there is anything wrong with surgery. You know, some people get it and it looks nice and they get it for a reason, but if you are taking it past where it doesn’t look natural, it’s not attractive at all...*

*... When you can look at someone and you can see they have surgery, it’s not nice. It’s nice when you can look at someone and you think, ‘oh right, they look good’ but you don’t know they’ve had it. But when you can see that they’ve had it, there is nothing nice about it.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“If they want it done, I’m not against it, I’m not against treatments at all. I just think some people go too far.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“Yeah because there’s a girl off The Hills called Heidi, she was quite like glamorous...*

*... She was beautiful...*

*... She looked a bit too Barbie like and she just went a bit crazy, she had the boobs, she had all the plastic surgery and now she’s just ruined her looks.” (Year 11A, Stockport)*

Indeed, some girls considered that the people on TOWIE had gone too far or were put off by certain procedures they had done e.g. where one of the women had her lips coloured and they were bleeding.

## 5 Sources of information

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### 5.1 Introduction

In this section, we look at how and where the girls learn about the procedures and how they seek information, including any marketing communications they receive. Much of what is picked up about cosmetic interventions seems to be done in a rather passive way; absorbing bits of information one has heard on the TV, read about or overheard in conversations. As the girls become older, it seems that for some, their widening awareness of the industry, their fascination with celebrity and by association, cosmetic procedures, and their developing interest in what it might mean for themselves, lead them to be more active in their information seeking. While some proactively sought out information about particular procedures and their own body features that they might like to change, for others, this was largely unfocused and simply involved following up interesting snippets of information. In both cases however, it could result in their becoming the recipient of more targeted communications.

### 5.2 Growing up

When asked about when they had first become aware that cosmetic procedures existed, many girls were able to point to specific formative influences. Having access to the media consumed by older sisters, mother and grandmothers was often key or hearing mothers making comments about procedures.

*“I was really, really young because I used to watch loads of ... what are they called? Like reality shows you know, with Katie Price and Kerry Katona...”*

**So how old do you reckon you were?**

*... I'd say 8/9...*

*... I used to watch it with my older sisters and I would have been in primary school because I remember reading one of Katie Price's books and it did have pictures of her having surgery, like she had a nose job, she had her lips done, she had cheek implants, 'Botox', her boobs done.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“I was about 13. Yeah Katie Price, I used to watch Peter Andre and Katie Price's reality TV show because I like Peter Andre.” (Year 11A, Stockport)*

*“I used to read, my granny has Take A Break magazines, and I used to love going in reading all the stories. I don't know why, then you'd always have a few about cosmetic procedures gone wrong or gone right or whatever, so I don't know, I think we are kind of subjected to it from quite an early age.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

Remarks made by mothers in the past were sometimes recalled even if their daughters were unsure how serious they were about the need for cosmetic interventions – one mum had joked that her daughter could get her a facelift if she became famous, in one triad, all three girls' mothers had said they wanted breast lifts/tummy tucks to undo the effects of having several children. Another respondent had seen her mother looking into/researching having a boob job but had been put off by the surgery/recovery involved and one mum wanted a breast reduction. However, one girl (who had researched boob jobs herself) said she thought her mother tried not to talk about it in front of her, because she knew her daughter felt insecure about her body.

*“If she (older sister) is talking about it, it wouldn't just go over my head, I would try and think about it and like, 'oh maybe it will look good on me' and some things like that. I wouldn't even know, some things like 'Botox' and all that, I wouldn't know what it was until she said it.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“I probably knew because of my sister. Like say, she's talking to my mum or something because they are into all that kind of thing, I probably just heard them and knew what it was.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“Apparently boob jobs, they don't really leave that much scarring and if you put like Bio Oil on it and stuff like that, I've heard it works quite well. My sister's best mate had one a couple of months ago and her scarring ain't that bad, like it's nearly all gone now... that makes me want it really bad, because I've seen her boobs and they are really nice...she showed them off and I was just really jealous.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“My sister wants a boob job too. She has just had her eyebrows temporarily tattooed on, they look so good I want them. She asked if I could get them done but they said you have to be 18 for insurance policies. She only paid £100 off her mate that's been doing like some course, they look so good.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“I have spoken to my mum about a boob job and my mum like, in the past she would be like, like when we used to watch the telly, she would say, 'oh I'd love a bit of liposuction' because she's always been on the heavier side but she's not really serious about it, if you know what I mean.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

Another girl had noticed her mother pondering the need for 'Botox'.

*“I just watch my mum sitting in the mirror and just going like this, 'oh I need 'Botox' and I'm just like, it's just to make yourself feel better and look better and just...”*

***Can you imagine your mum might do it if she had the money?***

*... Yeah, if she had the money I think she'd do it. I mean, not like drastically but I just think she'd do it around her eyes to like get rid of the wrinkles and stuff. Because wrinkles are a bad thing now apparently.” (Year 11A, Stockport)*

### 5.3 Media

The various media discussed in section 3 not only created the climate in which aspirations towards cosmetic interventions could develop but also were places where the girls learned about what was available and found out what procedures involved. Fundamentally they create awareness that the procedures exist, are accessible and were felt to give the impression that they are easy to undergo and, for the most part, are successful. The news and features in magazines, newspapers, broadcasts and digital media encouraged many of the girls to look further into the procedures.

*“When you’re in school and you’re like on the Daily Mail, let’s say someone has had her boobs done, ‘how much is that to get a boob job, shall we have a look how much it is to get a boob job nowadays?’ and then you do look into it and go, ‘she’s had her lips done, I don’t think lips are that much are they?’ and then you do go looking into – ‘oh look, you can get 50 quid off in here’, oh that’s in Stockport as well, so you do think ...” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“Yeah, I remember watching one of the Kardashian’s when they were getting it done and they were just sitting there like, getting like the laser on the legs. And it just looks like, it looks easy, so why wouldn’t you?” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“I watch that [Keeping up with the Kardashians] a lot and they’re always getting like fillers and all this stuff on their face, like any wrinkle that comes, they just ...*

*... They never seem to look that bad, even when they wake up they just seem perfect for some reason. It just looks really easy.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“I didn’t know about veneers until The Only Way is Essex was on, was put on telly. I didn’t know what they were, I thought they were just like dentures or whatever...”*

*... You see, I had my braces on when I was watching The Only Way is Essex and I was getting them off and all I kept on thinking was, it was like, teeth whitening, I was really looking into it.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“I’ve actually learned things on Embarrassing Bodies that I never knew before. And you don’t realise, it’s just like everything is on TV so much, that it gets taken in. It’s not like you sit there and you learn about it, where it’s just everywhere, it’s around you, you just naturally know what’s going on.” (Year 11, Essex)*

A girl who subscribed to Elle magazine suggested that they tried to be more informative about procedures and evaluate them in a less biased way, informing their readers about new developments. She also felt that being featured in a more sophisticated type of publication, it gave the procedures greater credibility.

*“It’s interesting to read that. They always talk about new things coming out, like new procedures and new technologies and stuff, like advancements. I think like...”*

*I don't know, ten years ago plastic surgery was a lot more like, taboo and now it's really increased in generation in the last couple of years or so...*

**So if you see it in places such as Elle, how does that make it seem?**

*... Yeah, with ones like OK, I think that seems a bit like trashy so it doesn't seem like something you want to do. But when it's in quite an elegant magazine like Elle, one that does seem quite fashionable but not like in a sort of high end way, then it does definitely seem like something more acceptable and something more fashionable to do." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

Some girls were clearly subscribing to internet sites/ following people on Twitter/ reading blogs (including those of people who have had procedures) and generally interacting with sources of information that keep them updated about what celebrities are doing and in touch with knowledge and opinion about cosmetic interventions.

*"I think I just love...this sounds like really stalkerish but I just like watching their TV programmes [the Kardashians] and like, I follow them on Twitter. I see what they look like and I'm like, 'I'd like to look like that' and they're all like, really similar and pretty and they're just lovely." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

One of the youngest girls (Year 10) had come across (when searching for an airbrush app that would enable her to improve some photos of herself) and downloaded an app on her phone called Plastic Surgery Simulator. This involves taking a photo of yourself and then changing it so you can see what you would look like if you had some work done; she now has a profile shot of herself in which she has changed her nose.

#### 5.4 Advertising

The girls were aware of a lot of advertising for cosmetic procedures; on the television, radio, in magazines and other press, on the tube/train. They specifically mentioned campaigns for laser eye surgery, for laser hair removal on QVC, for two particular cosmetic surgery providers, (these last examples involved endorsements by celebrities who had had procedures done).

The view was commonly voiced that the advertising on television is very influential because it makes procedures look so easy, and moreover, because it is on mainstream TV, people must assume that it must be an 'okay thing to do'. In the majority of triads across both locations, there was spontaneous mention of one of the main provider's TV campaigns (also seen in magazines) from which a number of girls could quote *'I've had a tummy tuck but the real difference is in my smile'* or something similar. While it was often thought to be silly or annoying, it was clearly memorable and had registered the

brand with the girls; it also made having a cosmetic procedure look like a 'normal, casual thing to do'.

*"I think the [name of provider] advert it looks, the way they do it makes it look so natural, like the people are just normal, everyday people and you would never know." (Year 11, Essex).*

Elsewhere, a girl was aware that somehow, she was unsure how, she had come to think of this same provider as one of the biggest and best.

*"I don't think it's through the advertising that I heard of them. Probably like, maybe it's like through some magazine stories. Because it's quite an expensive place to go isn't it so they probably would've mentioned it." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

In Stockport also, some girls recalled often hearing an ad on the local radio station Key103 which struck them because it made so little of what seemed an enormous amount of money for cosmetic surgery.

*"There's one that's always advertised on Key103... it's always on in the mornings and they're always having an offer of like, £5000 worth of cosmetic surgery for just £2500. They always have a 'just' £2500, as if it's not a huge amount of money..."*

*... It's always advertised on there and then the woman who advertises always sounds like, you know, that tone in your voice where it sounds safe and it sounds like it's ok, I don't know, it's something that's always struck me like she never really sounds like, I know she wouldn't sound worried about it but she always just sounds like it's the best thing in the world." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

Online, the girls were aware that there were numerous pop-up ads for procedures including teeth whitening, tummy tucks, skin treatments, laser eye surgery and veneers on various sites including those they might visit for doing homework as well as on Facebook and other social media sites that permit pop-ups. Ads for cosmetic procedures were also sometimes included among those playing before videos on YouTube. They considered these to be untargeted ads that everyone received.

*"Just like, when I Google things, even for like homework and things and you go on to sites and you see the advertisements down the side that are quite annoying but they're always there. There's always like a tummy tuck one that's always there or a face peel or 'look 10 years younger with this procedure' or... and they're always there." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*"They would get say, five adverts before they start ... so maybe one of them is about teeth whitening or laser eye surgery or maybe another cosmetic procedure." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

While they claimed not to look at them to any great extent, several of the Stockport girls were aware of the small ads for cosmetic procedure providers in magazines and in particular, in the back pages of titles like InStyle, Cosmopolitan, Company and Glamour. They thought that locating them alongside ads for psychics and chat lines made them seem less appealing especially when they were also often followed by ads for lawyers wanting to take on malpractice cases in the industry. They thought it unlikely that people would look seriously at such advertising and would probably go online to look for providers instead. However, slightly younger girls were less certain about how easy these were to ignore and described how they were drawn in by pretty faces and bold fonts.

*"And even, you know, putting adverts in the back of magazines which are available to 16 year old girls, it's a bit..."*

*... But then you like, you look at it...*

*... It is tempting; I'm not going to lie." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

They were very aware that the ads typically involved an attractive woman, some means of playing on the fact that the reader might be dissatisfied with how they look, an offer of a discount and, often the headline had something to do with gaining inner confidence. While some girls were a little dismissive of the ads, in general, it was felt that this message was one of the key motivations for having a procedure. It is worth noting that this is from the same campaign as that shown on television (see above) and its impact is very clear.

*"I think yeah, it's showing that she's had one and she's got this new found confidence..."*

*... Yeah like all of those adverts which were on telly which were like 'I had breast implants but the thing that everyone commented on was my smile'...*

*... They were always talking about, because they got this thing, it wasn't necessarily making them look better but was making them a more confident person on the whole and that was their main selling point, that advert.*

***And what did you think of that? Was that a valid selling point?***

*... I thought it was a really clever advert actually...*

*... It's quite a valid point though. If you do have surgery, you should do it to make yourself happy, I suppose, that should be your motivation behind it, like because it's something you want to do.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“I normally read Heat but even in the Heat magazines you’ve got an advert and I’ve seen them quite a lot and it’s all women stood there and she’s got a board across her boobs kind of like, saying, ‘I’ve just had my breasts done but the real change you can see is in my face’, a big cheesy grin on her. So you just think, ‘yes, they’re more endorsing the boob job’, it makes you feel happier, more self-confident.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

Others in this triad were more sceptical.

*“They don’t go through all the disadvantages because you need to think about these things before you actually go and have an operation done. They see this one ... as like very stick skinny happy and all because she’s had her boobs done and people with looks and self esteem issues might think, ‘I want to be like her and have them done’ and I bet that model hasn’t even had the boobs done, you know what I mean, it’s like she’s covered them up.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

There was no clear picture about how influential the advertising was; some felt that compared to the celebrity coverage it did not have the same impact but it was also evident that some ads were highly memorable and that for those whose interest has been piqued they invite further exploration.

*“You know, the advertisements don’t really make you want it, but then when you see people who have it, they look really good and it makes you want it more I think. And the way they are portrayed and talked about as well.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“You could have it if you want, you could look like all the celebrities. You do, you flick through a magazine and you go ‘I like her, I like that, and I like that’. And then the last page, it’s like ‘I can have that’.” (Year 11A, Stockport)*

Ironically also, it was through the small ads and in particular those for malpractice lawyers that some of the respondents felt they were more aware of the risks involved in procedures that they had previously thought posed no dangers.

*“I don’t think people think lasers can burn you. I don’t think people are as educated in terms of, you know, what the actual risks are of the cosmetic surgery. If you go for a cosmetic procedure, I think they have to give you like, you know, information about the risks and health implications that could go wrong. But I don’t think people really read them because once you’ve got to that point of, ‘I want to get a nose job’ or ‘I want to get a boob job’ then you don’t think about anything else other than what you’re going to have at the end of the procedure. It’s a 1 in a million chance, ‘it won’t happen to me’ but it actually could happen and you’d end up in a situation like this with the burns or the disappointment or something like that.” (Year 11A, Stockport)*

## 5.5 Targeted marketing

### 5.5.1 Emailed offers including those from third party discounters

Several girls had received e-mails, in particular offering them the opportunity to win laser eye surgery. In most cases, they had no idea where the companies in question had got their e-mail address from, but some assumed that at some point they must have 'signed up for something' that had led to their e-mail address being passed on; one girl suspected it was because she had a hotmail account. Others had received in addition, e-mails about teeth whitening, laser eye surgery, laser hair removal i.e. what were seen as the 'minor' treatments. These girls thought these were spam e-mails and they were unlikely to get them about the 'major' procedures because these are more complicated and involve a more considered decision making process. It was also suggested that it was likely that the senders had no idea of their age.

Mostly such emails were ignored (and not deleted), at other times they were junked; occasionally one might get passed on to someone who they think might use it.

*"I got emails about it. One of them was from an eye surgery or something, it was like 'win laser eye surgery' and I get stuff about that. I don't know how they've got my email but ... I get emails from them quite a few times like win things to do with that and all that." (Year 10, Essex)*

*"I think they just send out loads to all random people, it's not specifically to you." (Year 12, college, Essex)*

In a small number of cases, girls thought that they might have been responsible for triggering emails like these. A girl in Stockport received emails from the local radio station, Key 103 for cut-price procedures but she had invited these by signing up for one of their offers in the past.

*"I used to get emails from Key 103, deals, I don't know if they still do it. I stopped them and put them in my junk after a while because they had all these different deals and a few of them were, you know, deals on cosmetic surgery so, 'have a big reduction in price' but even then, it's still really expensive." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

Another girl was also aware that she might have signed up for something at a spa day that she visited with a discount voucher from a third party provider and this may have triggered the numerous emails about teeth whitening and laser hair removal that she was receiving. A small number thought they might have passed themselves off as

adults e.g. at least one girl was aware that she had lied about her age in order to access over-18 films.

*“Because I know when I registered for my email address, so that I can access films that are like 18 and stuff, I said that I was 18, so I think if they do sell it on, they sell it on to companies like that, because I’ve had emails that - I’ve just had four now in a row off PPI calculator and I’m not even old enough to have a loan or anything like finance.” (Year 12, Stockport)*

While most disliked the emails because they were a nuisance, some were fairly relaxed about them seeing them as something that could just be ignored if you are not interested, or as something that might be useful if you decided you wanted that procedure/didn’t like the feature/aspect of yourself it was about.

In one Essex triad, a girl received a lot of communication from the industry but she was aware that she had opened herself up to this from the sites she had visited/found via Google, newsletters she had signed up for etc. She felt she would rather receive these communications/be bombarded with images of flawless women than not know what was going on. In particular, she had signed up for a site called Daily Makeover which sends her a daily update on work celebrities have had done and links to sites about procedures (from some of the main providers). She had also noticed a large increase in pop-ups and e-mails about cosmetic procedures since she started researching it and was aware that this is because of cookies on the sites making those links. The emails included an offer of a free consultation from one of the providers which she was impressed by.

*“I think a lot of the time you can choose like what you get like, like I do follow things on Twitter and on Tumblr and on Facebook and I do, I have signed myself up to certain email accounts that have sent me tips and things of how to change your body ... so that is my fault because I’ve opened myself up to that, that is no one else has put it on me. But I feel like, if I don’t then, I’m not behind, but someone else is getting all that and getting motivated to look good and I’m not so ... you subject yourself to it but ..I would still rather do it and motivate myself and have a bit of like a lower self esteem, than actually not look at it at all because I then don’t know what I’m missing out on.” (Year 13, Essex)*

*“It’s not necessarily someone saying to you ‘have this done’, but it’s kind of like tempting, it’s like, ‘look at what you could have done’. Like I said, I’ve not actually had an email directed to me saying ‘have a boob job’ but I’ve had emails that say ‘look at this, look how you could look’, it’s more of a temptation and that makes you look into it more. They’re, god they’re like women’s health sites or women’s diet sites and there’s more just, it kind of gives you links and then it opens up to the world, you can get anything, you can look at anything you want, so it’s just easy to do that.” (Year 13, Essex)*

*“I’m signed up to Daily Makeover which is a letter, you get it every day, what the celebrity has done to herself and whatever. This is a link that was on a, that was offered, an email, that led to lip injections, ‘Botox’, dermabrasion, chemical peels, facelifts and laser therapy. That was all just on one link.” (Year 13, Essex)*

Several had also signed up to third party discount sites, often to get particular offers e.g. on hairdressing or cheap hotels and they were aware of and received, a lot of pop-ups, ads and offers for cosmetic procedures from those sites. A few respondents thought that they had also received a lot of e-mails, including about cosmetic interventions, ever since they signed up to one of them.

*“That [name of discounter] thing on my i-pad and when I click on it I always see like tummy tuck offer, laser hair removal offers and stuff like that. I don’t know, I think it’s interesting, sometimes they are interesting but sometimes I just think, ‘I’m not even interested in things like that so I don’t know why they are offering it’... But I don’t think they do it depending on who I am, I mean they don’t find specific things for me, they do it for anyone.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“I was going to go on a spa day and then I looked on [discount provider] and that did come up like the laser skin thing because they all come up in a list and teeth whitening was on there, laser hair removal was on there, ‘Botox’ was on there... literally, once you sign up for something ... Sometimes I have to sign out of my email on my phone because I’m just getting all these notifications and it just really does pee me off...I’ve had emails about teeth whitening and laser hair removal and stuff but never about boobs or anything like that.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“As soon as I went on [discount provider] that was on the front of it and it had all the different surgeries that you could get.” (Year 12, Stockport)*

The vast majority of the girls had not received texts from providers although some were accessing emails via their phones as well as social media such as Twitter and discount sites. In one case, after taking up an offer for laser hair removal from a third party discounter at a local salon, a respondent was now receiving texts from the salon giving her updated offers on laser hair removal. She also got a couple of e-mails a day from the discounter.

The view of some of the girls was that it would be harder for companies to get their mobile phone number than their email address and that if they did receive texts, they would seem more personal than an e-mail.

### 5.5.2 Social media

In one triad in particular in Stockport, the girls brought along examples of Tweets that came up on their phone from celebrities that they were following. Examples were

brought along of TOWIE characters promoting procedures from their own clinic or other providers.

*“That was one of his tweets – ‘heading to [provider clinic], to get my temps out and my veneers in and with a big smiley face’.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“Like you see something in like say, for instance like Jodie Marsh on Twitter recently, she’s been posting about dieting pills that she’s bought and I know it’s in the newspaper as well and things like that and she also posted about where she had her breasts redone and automatically, when that link came up, I clicked on it and I wanted to know more about it.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

One girl had subscribed to several sites on YouTube for things like beauty and fashion advice and tips, and found that the ‘gurus’ who posted weekly videos and who she looked up to (and whose advice she sometimes followed), were starting to mention the more everyday cosmetic procedures, say what they thought of them and sometimes endorse providers. Such sites might appeal to very young teens (such as her younger sister).

*“I found out quite a lot from YouTube. People I’m subscribed to on YouTube, like beauty gurus and stuff like, would put videos on talking about, not the extreme ones but like the smaller procedures that they’d done. Like this one was promoting teeth whitening and you can see like in the description she’s put loads of stuff about like how, like what happened, how her viewers have got a reduced price for it... So a lot of people do watch her videos. There’s also this one, this is a pair of sisters who have a channel called Pixiewoo, their subscribers I think, it’s like 150,000 subscribers and she was talking about how her and her sister had got ‘Botox’ and what it meant to them and whether they’d do it again.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

In this group, the girls pointed out the influence of YouTube generally but also specifically, how sites such as this make the viewer feel they are having a one on one conversation with someone who is not so dissimilar to themselves (see also 6.3).

## 6 Messages, Perceived Dangers and Safeguards

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### 6.1 Introduction

Here, we bring together the principal messages that the girls perceive are being communicated about cosmetic interventions, some of the dangers of such messages as they see them, and their ideas for safeguards that might be helpful to protect young girls.

### 6.2 Messages conveyed

Towards the end of the interview, the girls were asked about the messages that they thought the various media and other influences conveyed about cosmetic procedures. We have summed these up here.

- If there's something you don't like about your body, you can do something about it and you can do it now

While some of the girls might disagree with the idea of cosmetic procedures as a solution, there was general agreement that the influences combine to make girls of their age both aware of the procedures and of the possibility of making changes if there is something about themselves that they don't like. The fact that celebrities whom they admire are having procedures and ordinary people are following their example means that they are showing them the way and making the procedures both acceptable and part of everyday life.

*"Normally, if you didn't like something, you would just think, 'oh, I'll have to deal with it, there is nothing I can do', but when you see other people getting surgery, it's like, 'oh, if they can do it, I can do it'..."*

*... It's like average people like us in the world and you watch TV and you think, 'oh I'd love to look like that, I want to look like that'..."*

*... This is available for anyone because usually it used to be like celebrities, or a big thing, you had to be rich and everything but nowadays ... it's like if you look at the people in TOWIE they are not rich and they are getting it, it's just normal average people are getting it everyday." (Year 11, Essex)*

*"It's just saying how easy it is..."*

*... Yeah, personal image can be changed like, at the click of the fingers." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“But I think in some way it makes it more okay because it's easy to think these people I look up to, have had plastic surgery and maybe it makes it okay or makes you want to have some.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“They do like, market the idea of like, if you change yourself, you'll be like more confident, happier, more friends, better life.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“Quite a few years ago, this person from the X Factor, I think they were quite large and this magazine article were saying how she'd had liposuction and there's all these nutritionists people saying she could have lost that weight naturally, she just has to go on a good diet but she was like, 'I just wanted it to be gone quickly' and so she got this liposuction.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

- It's a normal thing to have done and is becoming more so; lots of people are having it done now and it is becoming more accepted

*“Nowadays I wouldn't see plastic surgery as such a big deal because it's so normal, it's so out there in the media, everyone is doing it, it's not a big deal....” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“Like I think like not our generation but the generation above us, will just go and get boob jobs...”*

*... They'll grow into having surgery whereas it used to be not so popular, now it's becoming popular and then in the next couple of years, it will be normal to have it done.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“Information about it and constant exposure to it in magazines and stuff is probably going to make it more socially acceptable.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

- It's very accessible

There are lots of places where you can go to have the procedures and the only barrier is cost especially for the 'major' procedures. However, there are lots of offers and a range of prices, and loans are also available. Moreover, if you can make a good enough case, the NHS may also fund the procedure.

*“Yeah you can get a loan. There's adverts on telly, you can get a loan with doing it now...”*

*... You can get like, payday loans where you pay money back each pay day and stuff like that, so if you can't afford it, you can get a loan...*

*... I know laser eye surgery, it says something like, there is an offer that you pay each month and it's £99.00 per month.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

The low cost of certain procedures makes them seem very accessible.

*“I think the more popular things become, the cheaper it is. I used to think 'Botox' would be like, so much money, and teeth whitening, like – obviously, if you go to*

*like somewhere professional to get your teeth done, it's like £500, but then if you go to the sun bed shop down the road it's ..*

*... £90.00...*

*... Yeah 90 quid and it's the same with 'Botox' or is 'Botox' less?..*

*... No 'Botox', it can be expensive to have it done in the surgery but I know you can have it done at the sun bed shop near me and I think it's £120.00. Now that will last you say six months. £120.00, it's like £30.00 a month or something, it's nothing." (Year 12, Stockport)*

While there is some awareness that there are risks involved (see the next page), they are unsure whether paying more would make a difference to these. In one triad, they suspected that if a procedure is cheap, then you may be more likely to take the risk (this was not the majority view and we did not discuss this in detail).

*"I think the risk that you take when you have it done, is, is this person actually a proper professional to be doing this? But you think 'oh it's only cheap, you know, we might as well', you don't think ...*

*... You'd take the risk, wouldn't you?...*

*... You know when you have whatever cosmetic procedure done that there is a risk of it going wrong or something happening, that is all part of the parcel, that is a risk that you take. If you want that look, you'll do it...*

*... Like, you can go and get your lips done cheap and they mess up, but celebrities, they pay, god knows how much, to get their lips done and most of theirs mess up, so no, I think it does depend on you as a person on how you react to it." (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

While more costly cosmetic surgery might seem to be out of the reach of ordinary people, particularly in Stockport, it was suggested that the large sums involved are presented in such a way as to make them seem perfectly acceptable.

*"It's not as if they hide the price but they seem to make it out as if that's fine...*

*... Yes, like they advertise the price lots, as if it's a really good thing." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

- It's not a big decision especially for the 'minor' procedures

Just as in the main research, the common view was that it did not seem to be such a big decision at the lowest risk end of the spectrum e.g. to have your teeth whitened or to have laser hair removal. While the girls sometimes spoke of how someone thinking about cosmetic surgery needed to take the decision seriously because the effects are not reversible and if it goes wrong you may be left with the consequences for the rest of

your life, they also felt that the decision ultimately, came down to how much you wanted that procedure done and whether that desire outweighed the fear of having it done. As before, there were mixed views on laser eye surgery; it was serious if something was to go wrong but because it is everywhere and marketed as though it is a very easy, straightforward procedure, it is not a big decision to go ahead.

*“They kind of advertised it like you can kind of have it done while you were there and it wouldn’t take that much time and next time you’re here just pop in and you’ll be able to have it done kind of thing, or if you’ve got children like, drop them in the crèche and just have it here kind of thing. It wasn’t like, I just got the impression it was quite easy to sort out, it wasn’t like a ‘book in advance’ thing.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

*“When I see on the adverts, laser eye surgery, all you have to do is put your eyes there and to me, it doesn’t seem like anything.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“On the advert I saw it was like a woman went into a shop off the high street and got it done there and it’s like a beauticians as well.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

*“I think some of them are. Like microdermabrasion, teeth whitening, laser eye surgery, I don’t think are big decisions.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

*“I think breast is a big deal but when you want it so bad you sort of, it becomes like a less, it’s not such a hard decision, it’s not a hard decision where you want it so bad. They say that there’s no pain, no gain, so you just go through with it because that’s what you want to look pretty.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

- It is pretty safe

For what are seen as everyday, ‘normal’ procedures, it was felt that there was little risk and for the bigger procedures, the risks were played down in the media.

*“It [the ads] doesn’t say anything about the actual procedure; it says a lot more about the product of the procedure.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“There’s never like any, ‘but this could happen’, kind of thing. It’s always, ‘well, after this, you’ll be great, you’ll look ten times better’, kind of thing. It’s not like, ‘well, this could happen and you could look even worse’.” (Year 11B, Stockport)*

There seemed to be some assumption that if you chose your supplier carefully, possibly based on celebrity recommendation and paid an appropriate amount rather than going for the cheapest, the risks would be less.

*“But I think you’ve got to be careful because you are changing something about your body and it is like operations so you’ve got to like go to a good place and it is like a competitive market, like advertisements and stuff and groups will try and like draw you in and they may not be like the best quality. I don’t know, that’s like the best way to describe it. But you know what I mean, you’ve got to be like*

*careful about how you go about it because they are like looking to take your money.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

*“It’s made out that if you want it done, go for it. It’s not a big operation or if it is, it will be worth it in the end...”*

*... And if it’s not worth it, you can get it changed to what you want.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

### 6.3 Perceived dangers and safeguarding

Unlike the first piece of research, the girls were not informed during the interview about the current state of the cosmetic interventions industry with respect to safeguards or the lack of them. They therefore discussed this cold and as might be expected, there were just a few suggestions made and most often, these were one-offs. They are reported here however for completeness. It was notable that the Southport girls tended to approach the industry with greater caution than the girls from Essex who were less concerned about introducing safeguards.

Some of the older girls in particular were aware that a lot of media coverage, emails and offers are possibly aimed at girls like them who are near to the age where they might want/ be able to make their own decision about having a procedure and taking out a loan themselves to pay for it – the Stockport girls saw this as rather ‘intimidating’.

*“Yeah I think that it does pressure girls, especially our age where we don’t like how we look...”*

*... And I think it’s like aimed at us as well because we are getting to that age of 18 where we can decide ourselves, we don’t have to ask our parents’ permission anymore. So I feel like a lot of things like, cosmetic procedures are aimed at me in particular, not just me, but my age group...*

*... It’s kind of like, they’ve built us up like say, I started reading it at 14, I’m now 17 and I’m nearly old enough to get plastic surgery and it’s kind of gone from introducing it slowly to ...*

*... It’s there if you want it...*

*... Yeah, it’s there if you want it, you know there’s probably one round the corner if you want it.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

*“I think it’s aimed at people who have more money than us to be honest. I think maybe they aim to get you interested in it now.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

While some assumed that it would be girls who have less confidence who may be tempted to see cosmetic procedures as a solution, others who did not see themselves in that way, acknowledged that they are influenced. One girl certainly felt she had been

influenced by the beauty 'guru' she subscribes to even though she was also aware that she was being cleverly manipulated.

*"I think if you just saw something in the back of the magazine and you hadn't even thought of it before, especially as you normally just flick through those pages, then I think it would be something you would just flick past. but with videos like this one, so that's like the video lasts for 13:24, and probably about 5 minutes of that was on teeth whitening. And she was really promoting it and saying like how good it was and showing her teeth and how they'd changed. That made me want to have teeth whitening because I was like 'it's so easy'. That's something I still hold by, based on this video, I would still have my teeth whitened although that one was a more negative view on it. I think with things like this though you would be more likely to take it up, especially if they sort of present themselves as your friend because it's just one and one so it does seem a lot more friendly..."*

***They're in their bedroom; you're in your bedroom.***

*... Yeah exactly. It's a lot more personal to you rather than something like that. Because they know who their viewers are because they can get the demographics up so they know how to present it to you." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

However, she claimed that she did not feel pressurised by such media; they were simply an influence.

*"Because I really look up to these two people, I've bought clothes that they've bought because I really like the clothes so it's almost like, because they've done it, it's acceptable for me to do it and I can see why it's good to do it therefore I will do it, sort of thing. And it makes it more real, having someone speak to you that's actually had it done, that's like a real person your age, that's not a celebrity or anything, I guess that could influence people more."*

***Do you think it goes as far as putting pressure on young girls to have these things done? Is it just purely influencing as opposed to pressurising?***

*No, definitely not. I think that like, all the advertisements and everything, while they do encourage it, it's just like an option that's there. There's no pressure specifically..."*

*... I think it depends on what kind of person you are though. Because I know some people who are more susceptible to advertising and I don't know, marketing ploys that the companies use and I don't know, may feel like more influenced by them perhaps." (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

Some girls, including the youngest of those taking part, thought that there needed to be more protection because if the idea of having a cosmetic intervention was already in the minds of girls of their age, they thought it was quite likely that those girls would go on to have some work done. However, they were unsure how this might be achieved. They recognised that the numerous television programmes watched by young girls are having

a very big impact on attitudes but they could not see how the situation could be changed. Others also thought that the industry should not target very young girls (e.g. 12-15 years).

*“There definitely needs to be more protection because yeah, girls at this age, if they are thinking about it now, it’s pretty much likely they will get it done.” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“Especially TOWIE that ...*

*... When they’ve got TV programmes like that ...*

*... It makes you think ‘oh my god I want to’ ...” (Year 10, Essex)*

*“I’d say TV is probably the biggest influence ... I don’t know what you’d do about it but I think definitely people, like younger people, have been exposed to it more when we were younger and I don’t know, I don’t think that’s a good thing really. It makes people unhappy with themselves and they don’t really need to be.” (Year 12, school, Stockport)*

It was proposed that such programmes should be aired at appropriate times; for example, after 10 pm was seen as a suitable slot for TOWIE (it is on at 10pm currently) while the late afternoon slot for Real Housewives was seen as not suitable in one triad as it picked up a family audience after school.

*“I remember when I watched an episode of it and one of the woman on it and she was having a face lift and it was actually on telly about half past three and my brother’s came in from school and he was like, ‘what’s she having done?’ and I was like, ‘I think she’s having a face lift done’. And he was shocked and I think they were shocked because it was on telly, it was on the TV at that time of the day...*

*... That should be on after like ...*

*... after 9 o’clock.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

In addition, one respondent said she had seen advertising for cosmetic procedures on Nickelodeon when watching it with her little brother who is 7 and she thought this should not be allowed. Similarly, it was suggested that social media such as Facebook were not appropriate places to advertise procedures as they could be reaching children as young as 10.

As in the main research, the girls did not consider that advertising should be banned altogether or that it was realistic as an aim because the industry is ‘everywhere’. However one triad in Stockport suggested that advertisements should be stripped back to the essentials of name, logo, contact details and procedures offered so that those

who are really interested can find suppliers and contact them to find out more, and others are not drawn in by the before and after shots, the beautiful bodies and the discount offers.

*“And I think it shouldn’t be banned because if people really want it done, they should be allowed to have it done. But I don’t think on an advert they should be able to go into that much depth...If you want to know, you go and find it out for yourself. If you are advertising laser eye surgery, it should be ...*

*... ‘a laser eye surgery company’...*

*... Promote it with the logo, phone number, contact details and that is it.” (Year 12, college, Stockport)*

The situation where salons are promoting their offer by having leaflets on the street was also seen as unacceptable; it was suggested that potential customers should have to go into the place to pick up information. The girls in Essex did not however think there was anything wrong with sandwich boards on the street promoting procedures.

It was proposed that some of the safeguards should come from the industry and that for example, providers should advise young girls who seek procedures to wait, or tell them that they do not need them/that it is not a good idea when they are so young etc. Some thought that in particular, there should be some protection regarding breast enlargement to prevent girls who are too young/still growing from having a boob job.

*“I think they should turn away some people, but obviously they won’t do it because it makes them money. But I think if you think someone doesn’t need it, or it’s not going to help them and if they’ve had too much and it’s going to ruin their face, you should turn around and say like, ‘no, I can’t do that for you. Or if you have someone young, you should say, ‘well think about it until you’re 21 and make sure it’s what you want to do because you can’t go back on something like that’, but they don’t though.” (Year 11, Essex)*

*“I think the bigger things are like a bigger decision and we are too young to make that decision.” (Year 12, college, Essex)*

While some felt that under 18’s/ those just turning 18 should not be allowed to have cosmetic surgery, others felt this would be a mistake. Those in Years 12/13 in Essex felt that they were old enough to make their own decisions about more minor procedures like teeth whitening, laser hair removal etc and there was no reason why these services should not be marketed to them. The oldest girls in Year 13 suggested that there were much worse things on the internet to worry about than access to information about cosmetic procedures, surgical or otherwise. Moreover, it was neither

realistic to prevent teenagers from accessing information on the topic nor a good idea to do so because it only served to make it 'forbidden fruit' and therefore more desirable.

Certainly, it was felt by some that any advertising/ information needed to talk more about the risks rather than including them as the equivalent of 'small print'.

*"You see the benefits of procedures but you do not see the risks at all, you do not see what could happen. It's just, I think if they were to advertise, if they're going to do it, then they need to put the risks as well, they need to do 50/50 either side and like... a balanced argument and not just biased towards 'I want the money I don't care if it goes wrong'." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

*"I do think they should need to put out the other side of it though because there's a lot of why it's all good but you don't hear about why it's bad..."*

*... People need to view it as an operation rather than a quick fix." (Year 11B, Stockport)*

The final idea related to communicating with young people in school, possibly using a video that is sent out to schools informing about the risks of cosmetic procedures; the subject could be covered as part of the PHSE curriculum alongside drugs and alcohol. It was however also recognised that this would not stop those who were determined to have something done.

*"I think something like even a video or something that would go round schools that would raise awareness. Because we saw a video on cyber bullying and it definitely raised awareness in the school, it hits home and you think you know what, this could actually happen to me in my school..."*

*... Girls will still have boob jobs no matter how many times somebody tells them 'it's wrong, it's not going to make anyone like you more, it's just a waste of money'. They're still going to want it to make themselves feel good, not to prove anyone else's point of view, just to make them feel better." (Year 11A, Stockport)*

## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Recruitment screening questionnaire

Hello, my name is.....I am working on behalf of Creative Research and Acumen Research. I wonder if you would be interested in taking part in some market research we are conducting to find out the views and experiences of the public with regard to cosmetic procedures. By this, I mean cosmetic surgery such as 'nose jobs', breast enlargement and 'tummy tucks' as well as cosmetic treatments such as 'Botox', dermal fillers and laser hair removal. As part of this, we would like to talk to young people about what they know about such procedures and how they feel about them.

The research involves taking part in a face-to-face interview along with a couple of friends, to discuss your opinions. This will last up to 1 ½ hours. In return for your time, I can offer you £ as a contribution towards your expenses and as a gesture of thanks.

<b><u>Recruiter: please fill in the following details</u></b>	
<b><u>RESPONDENT DETAILS</u></b>	
Explain that you need to record the respondent's contact details so that they can be contacted in the event of a change of plans (e.g. the moderator is ill) and also for quality control procedures. Reassure respondents that no personal details or responses will be passed on to anyone not directly concerned with the research without their express permission.	
Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	
Email address:	
<b><u>Give Respondent DATA PROTECTION card and read out</u></b>	
"The group discussion or interview you take part in will be audio recorded and a transcription will be produced. This card describes how the information you provide will be used and the steps that will be taken to protect your confidentiality. Please sign below to indicate your agreement with this procedure.	
<b>Respondent signature:</b>	
<b>You must get signed consent from all parents. The signed consent letter for each participant must be returned to the Office in advance of the interview. Alternatively, you must bring the signed consent letter to the research interview and hand it to the moderator or if an adult chaperone is accompanying the girls, then he/she may hand over the letters if they are a parent of one of the girls. You must not ask the teenagers to bring the letters with them as we then have no guarantee it has been signed by the parents.</b>	

<b><u>METHOD OF RECRUITMENT</u></b>	
FROM RECRUITER'S DATABASE	FREE FOUND (In Street/House to house etc)
OTHER (PLEASE WRITE IN):	
<b><u>RECRUITER DECLARATION</u></b>	
I DECLARE THAT THIS IS A TRUE RECORD OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NAMED RESPONDENT WHICH WAS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS AND THE MRS CODE OF CONDUCT. I AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998.	
SIGNATURE: _____	
PRINT NAME: _____ DATE: _____	
For Creative Research use only Respondent ID	

**Once this questionnaire has been completed, it constitutes sensitive personal data – please see notes at the end regarding how it should be treated**

## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

### D1 SOCIAL GRADE OCCUPATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD:

**ASK THE FOLLOWING FIVE QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION:**

IF RETIRED, ASK FOR PREVIOUS OCCUPATION, IF PRIVATE PENSION RECEIVED

IF LOCAL AUTHORITY OR CIVIL SERVICE OR ARMED FORCES, ASK GRADE/RANK

IF SELF-EMPLOYED OR MANAGERIAL, ASK FOR NO. OF EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBLE FOR

ASK FOR DETAILS OF TRAINING/QUALIFICATIONS INDUSTRY (WRITE IN)

### NOW CODE SOCIAL CLASS

<b>AB</b>	1	<b>Record social class; there are no quotas but it is important that this is collected and recorded</b>
<b>C1</b>	2	
<b>C2</b>	3	
<b>D</b>	4	
<b>E</b>	5	

### D2 Age: Write in \_\_\_\_\_ and code below in relevant school year.

14-15 (Year 10)	1	<b>Two triads at each location should be with girls in Years 10 and 11 at school; the other two triads should be with girls in Years 12 and 13 at school. Girls aged 16 or 17 may also be in further education (at college), in an apprenticeship or working (or a combination of these). If not at school, please code in relevant equivalent year group and write in below what they are doing.</b>
15-16 (Year 11)	2	
16-17 (Year 12)	3	
17 (Year 13)	4	
18 (Year 13)	5	<b>CLOSE</b>

### D3 Ethnicity: (code here and at Q4)

White	1	Black	3	<b>No quotas but would like some ethnic minority representation across the triads</b>
Asian	2	Other	4	

### Code the triad this screener relates to

T1: Manchester	1		T5: Essex	5	
T2: Manchester	2		T6: Essex	6	
T3: Manchester	3		T7: Essex	7	
T4: Manchester	4		T8: Essex	8	

## SCREENING

<b>S1. SHOW CARD A</b> Can I just check, does any of your immediate family work in any of the following professions or occupations?					
Market Research or Marketing	1	<b>CLOSE</b>	GPs, Hospital doctors, any nurses, any health care assistants, people working in the private medical sector, dentists, dental nurses	4	<b>CLOSE</b>
Public Relations or Journalism	2		Any profession/job related to cosmetic procedures	5	
Advertising	3		The cosmetic/beauty industry/a company that makes or sells products for the face/body/hair	6	
			Beautician/beauty therapy	7	
			None of these	8	<b>CONTINUE</b>

<b>Q1.</b> Which ONE of these most closely reflects your attitude towards cosmetic surgery and/or cosmetic treatments such as a facelift or 'Botox'?			
I would definitely consider having a cosmetic intervention if I needed one in the future	1	<b>No Quotas but we would expect the majority to code 1 or 2</b>	
I might consider having a cosmetic intervention if I needed one in the future	2		
I don't know if I would consider having a cosmetic intervention but I'm not against the idea	3		
I would definitely not consider having a cosmetic intervention even if I was told I needed one in the future	4	<b>CLOSE</b>	

**Q2. I would like to show you a list of some of the different types of cosmetic treatments and procedures available today. SHOW CARD B.**

2a) Which of these have you heard of?

2b) Which of these have you looked into? – by that, I mean researching the treatment or who provides it on the internet, getting information from a provider, looking at ads from providers of that treatment?

		a) heard of	b) looked into	c) had	
<b>Non surgical</b>	Injectable cosmetic treatments such as Botox or dermal/soft tissue fillers	1	1	1	<b>DO NOT ASK BUT IF RESPONDENT VOLUNTEERS THE FACT SHE HAS UNDERGONE AN INTERVENTION, PLEASE RECORD UNDER c) had</b>
	Chemical peel	2	2	2	
	Microdermabrasion	3	3	3	
	Laser skin resurfacing	4	4	4	
	Laser hair removal	5	5	5	
	Cosmetic dental treatments such as teeth whitening or veneers	6	6	6	
<b>Surgical</b>	Face/neck lift	7	7	7	
	Other face/neck surgery	8	8	8	
	Nose job	9	9	9	
	Breast enlargement or reduction	10	10	10	
	Liposuction/sculpture	11	11	11	
	Tummy tuck	12	12	12	
	Cosmetic dental surgery e.g. implants	13	13	13	
	Laser eye surgery	14	14	14	
Any other treatment or procedure not listed above – please record	15	15	15		
None of these	16	16	16		

**Q3. Have you ever received any of the following?**

An email or letter addressed to you from a company or salon providing cosmetic surgery or treatments	1	<b>At least 2 out of 3 girls in the triad should have received one or more of these</b>
A text message on your mobile phone from a company or salon providing cosmetic surgery or treatments	2	
A cut-price offer for a cosmetic procedure from a third party organisation such as Groupon, Amazon	3	
Adverts about cosmetic procedures on your Facebook page or other social network site	4	

**All may have received one or more of these – if a girl does not code 1 or 2, she should code 3 and/or 4.**

**Please ask all girls to print out and bring along copies of emails, letters, offers, ads etc. If they have received one or more texts, then ask them not to delete it so that we can see it.**

**Also, ask them to bring along copies of their favourite magazines where they might expect to read about cosmetic procedures or about celebrities who have had them. If they have any articles or news items that they have found especially interesting on this subject, then we would love them to bring them along. Please give them the letter that sets all this out.**

<b>Q4. Record respondents ethnicity SHOW CARD C</b>					
White	White British	1	Black	Caribbean	7
	White other	2		African	8
Asian	Indian	3		Mixed	Other Black
	Pakistani	4	White and Black Caribbean		10
	Bangladeshi	5	White and Black African		11
	Other Asian	6	White and Asian		12
<b>No quotas but try to recruit at least a couple of girls from minority ethnic groups at each location</b>			Other mixed		13
			Other	Other ethnic group (write in)	14

### SHOW CARD A

Market Research or Marketing

Public Relations

Journalism

Advertising

GPs, Hospital doctors, any nurses, any health care assistants, people working in the private medical sector, dentists, dental nurses

Any profession/job related to cosmetic treatments/procedures

The cosmetic/beauty industry/a company that makes or sells products for the face/body/hair

Beautician/Beauty therapy

None of these

## SHOW CARD B

1. Injectable cosmetic treatments such as Botox or dermal/soft tissue fillers
2. Chemical peel
3. Microdermabrasion
4. Laser skin resurfacing
5. Laser hair removal
6. Cosmetic dental treatments such as teeth whitening or veneers
7. Face/neck lift
8. Other face/neck surgery
9. Nose job
10. Breast enlargement or reduction
11. Liposuction/sculpture
12. Tummy tuck
13. Cosmetic dental surgery e.g. implants
14. Laser eye surgery
15. Any other treatment or procedure not listed above
16. None of these

## SHOW CARD C

<b>White</b>	<b>White British</b> <b>White Other</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>Indian</b> <b>Pakistani</b> <b>Bangladeshi</b> <b>Other Asian</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>Caribbean</b> <b>African</b> <b>Other Black</b>
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>White and Black Caribbean</b> <b>White and Black African</b> <b>White and Asian</b> <b>Other mixed</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>Other ethnic group</b>

## DATA PROTECTION

**The Data Protection Act requires that we collect and use the information you provide to us in a manner that respects and protects your confidentiality.**

**Your personal details (such as name, address, phone number) will not be disclosed to anyone else without your permission other than Creative Research, the company carrying out the research.**

The recordings/transcripts will only be listened to/read for research purposes. Excerpts from the recordings/transcripts may be used to illustrate the research findings. This will always be done in a way to protect your identity (e.g. comments will not be attributed).

**In exceptional cases** the recordings/transcripts will be listened to/read by people from the client organisation working on this project. In these circumstances, where possible we will go through the material first to delete any references to people's names or anything else that could identify them.

Anyone from the client organisation who listens to/reads the recordings/transcripts will sign an undertaking that they will respect the anonymity of those taking part.

**Any other material or information** generated by you, such as ideas written down on paper, will be subject to the same strict controls.

You have the right to **withdraw your consent** at any point in the interview/discussion. You may also withdraw from the interview/ discussion at any point. Please sign to indicate your agreement with this procedure.

## Recruiter Guidelines

### Purpose

This research with teenage girls is being conducted on behalf of the Department of Health and follows a previous larger study among the general public. The Department wishes to understand the views of young people on the industry providing cosmetic surgery and cosmetic treatments, the influences upon them and whether they think young people are adequately protected.

We are particularly interested in the views of girls aged 14-17 who have received emails, texts or other forms of communication from an organisation providing cosmetic surgery or other cosmetic treatments. We are aware that some organisations are encouraging young people to think about having such procedures and would like to find out more about this. These emails/ letters/ texts may be unsolicited or may have come about because the girl in question made an enquiry/ went on their website etc.

There are two letters relating to this research; one for parents to give their consent and the other for the girls. This second letter sets out what the girls should bring along to the discussion.

**Please ensure you obtain parental consent for each member of the friendship triad. You should either ensure all signed consent letters are sent to the Office in advance of the interview or you should bring them to the interview venue and hand them over to the moderator. If an adult chaperone is accompanying the girls, then he/she may hand over the letters if they are a parent of one of the girls. You must not ask the teenagers to deliver the letters as we will have no way of ensuring the parents have signed them.**

The interviews will last up to 1 ½ hours and there is an incentive of £30.

### Recruitment criteria

#### **SEG, Age and Ethnicity**

We do not know how easy it will be to find girls who have received communications from organisations providing cosmetic surgery or other cosmetic treatments so we have not set strict recruitment criteria. However, we would like to talk to girls from a range of social backgrounds and ages. We would expect all three girls in a friendship triad to come from the same year group at school; they may of course come from different SEGs. For each location, you should try to recruit two triads with girls aged 14-16 (Years 10 or 11 at school) and two triads with girls aged 16-17 years. Girls aged 16 or 17 may be in Years 12 or 13 at school or could also be in further education at college, in an apprenticeship or working (or a combination of these). Do not recruit anyone who is already 18 or older.

There are no quotas on ethnicity although we would welcome representation from ethnic minorities.

#### **Interest in Cosmetic Procedures**

All the girls should be interested in cosmetic procedures – they like to read magazines/watch programmes on the subject and/or the celebrities that might have had a procedure. When it comes to whether they might consider having a procedure in the future, they should all code 1-3 @ Q1 and we would expect most to code 1 or 2 – they would definitely or possibly consider it.

Q2. asks about the procedures the girls are aware of and those they have looked into. By 'looked into', we mean researching the treatment or who provides it on the internet, getting information from a provider, looking at ads from providers of that treatment, looking at the experiences of people who have had the procedure ie. taking steps to find out more rather than simply reading about it in a magazine. We would expect most girls to have looked into one or more of the procedures.

Q3. is the key question for recruitment because it focuses on communications the girls have

received from providers of cosmetic surgery or treatments. We would like 2 out of 3 girls in the triad to have received an **email or letter addressed to them personally** or a **text on their mobile phone** (codes 1 and 2 @ Q3) The other girls should at least **receive emails from third party organisations** like Groupon or Amazon offering procedures or get **adverts on their personal Facebook page** or other social media. Please ask if you are unsure whether something qualifies.

### **Screening and Exclusions**

Please do not recruit anyone who has members of their family who work in any of the types of job on Card A (S1).

**Please ensure that ALL respondents are comfortable with this discussion subject and prepared to share their views openly.**

### **Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Please make sure every respondent has read the Data Protection card and given their signed consent.

#### **Front Page**

Please complete the details on the front page:

- the respondent contact details
- respondent's signature indicating agreement with how the information they provide will be used
- the method you have used to find people – if you are using your own database please remember the restrictions on previous attendance
- the recruiter declaration.

#### **Data Security**

Once a questionnaire has been completed, it will contain information that is classed as 'personal sensitive data' – this is because it includes information that can be used to identify the respondent along with their answers to a number of different questions. This means it needs to be kept securely. You should keep it with you at all times when you are out in the field and make sure the information is not on view to someone else. For example, keep it in an envelope and/or keep it in a briefcase. When you are at home, it should be kept in a secure location, such as a locked drawer or cupboard and not somewhere where a visitor to your home can see it.

On the day of the interview, **if you are asked to do so**, you should take all the questionnaires to the venue in an envelope and hand them over to the moderator in person. If someone else is hosting the interview/group on your behalf, you should ensure they comply with these instructions. If for any reason this is not possible, you should send the completed questionnaires to our offices at the address at the bottom of the page using **Special Delivery** - you must not use the ordinary post. If you provide all the respondent details electronically, once the job has been completed and any back checking has been carried out, you must destroy any paper questionnaires. This should be done by shredding (or burning) – you must **not** put them in your household domestic waste.

Good luck!

## 7.2 Letter to girls explaining about materials of interest

Dear research participant

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. It is for the Department of Health and is on the subject of cosmetic procedures – both cosmetic surgery (for example, face lifts, ‘boob jobs’ and tummy tucks) and other cosmetic treatments (things like ‘Botox’ and laser hair removal). The department is interested in finding out what the general public thinks about the industry and as part of this, what teenage girls think.

The research will take the form of an informal discussion involving you and two of your friends. It will be led either by myself or my colleague, Lindsey Edwards. We will want to talk to you about the magazines and websites you like to read, celebrities you follow on Twitter – anything to do with cosmetic procedures that you have found interesting.

We are also interested in any communications you have personally received from organisations that provide cosmetic surgery or treatments – letters or emails addressed to you, texts sent to your mobile, ads for cosmetic procedures that have appeared on your Facebook page or offers for cosmetic procedures from organisations like Groupon or Amazon.

We would like you to bring these things along to the discussion so that we can all see them and discuss them. I have put together below a list of all the things that you could bring along.

Firstly, the things that you have come across or seen around and found interesting:

- Magazines or articles/ ads cut out from magazines about cosmetic procedures or it could be about celebrities who have had or may have had a procedure
- If there are websites that you like or dislike, then please print out pages that have particularly got your attention. If this is not possible, then please note down their addresses.

Then there's the things that have been directed at you personally

- If you have received an email or letter addressed to you about cosmetic procedures, please print out a copy (if an email) and bring the email/letter along
- If you have received a text on your mobile, please don't delete it but show us when you come along
- If you have received offers from organisations offering discounts on cosmetic procedures, please print them out and bring them along
- If ads about cosmetic procedures have appeared on your Facebook page (or other social networking site), please print them out or if not possible, please make a note of what is being advertised and who is advertising.

We've probably not covered everything that you might have come across about cosmetic procedures so please bring anything else that we've forgotten! If you're unsure whether something is relevant, just bring it along anyway.

We hope you will enjoy taking part – we're looking forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

## 7.3 Discussion guide

### Introduction - 5

- Moderator introduction – purpose of the research, reiterate confidentiality, how the information is used/not used, explain about recording etc, outline what is going to happen during the discussion
- Reassure them that if there are any words we use that they don't understand, to tell us and we will try and express them in a different way
- Respondents briefly introduce themselves: first names, age, year at school/ what they are doing if not at school, family/siblings, interests, how long they have known each other

### Warm-up - 10

- Which famous females do they admire and why? If they are not chosen primarily for their physical appearance, we will probe for females they admire based on their looks and why they have chosen them.
- Thinking about girls/women whose looks they admire, we will explore whether there are particular features that make up what girls of their age might see as the 'ideal' look (if appropriate, we will invite them to show us pictures in magazines they have brought along).
- Do they think this is how they look in reality, at home, how they have always looked – why, why not? What is different? (we will not specifically prompt on the possible use of make-up/ cosmetic procedures/ image manipulation but see what comes out).

### Awareness, perceived motivations and personal interest - 15

- The respondents are reminded that they were asked about various procedures when they were asked to come along today. We will show the list and ask them if there are any that they have not heard of. We will also have the pack of cards with the procedures on so that the girls can use it if they wish to differentiate between procedures at different points in the discussion – we will remove from this any procedures that they have not heard of.
- Which are the cosmetic procedures that they have heard most about or feel they know most about – what sorts of things have they heard about them?
- Do they think that a lot of people have these sorts of procedures? What sorts of people? Are some of them associated with particular types/ groups of people (celebrities, age groups, other groups in society)? Or is it something that anyone might think about – a normal part of everyday life?
- Why might people want to have these procedures, what might their reasons/motivations be? If young people are mentioned, in particular probe for their motivations. Do they think these are good reasons for having a procedure?
- How do they feel about it? Can they imagine themselves thinking about having a procedure at some point? Have they thought about it? Why might they want to do that?

## Sources of information - 25

- Having got an idea of how much they feel they know about cosmetic procedures, we will firstly ask them to think back to when they first became aware of such things – how did this happen? How has that knowledge grown since? Did they go looking for information (where?) or did it come to them (from where?)
- Where do they get their information about them now? This will firstly be asked as an open question and then each source followed up and the influences explored - peers, older girls, parents, family members, salons on the high street, media, internet, etc. Once we have exhausted the sources they spontaneously mention, we will follow up with others to ensure all are covered (i.e the order shown below will vary)
- In relation to **personal networks**, we will discuss whether the people they know talk about cosmetic procedures – at school, within the family, on Facebook/ Twitter etc., some other group. What do they discuss? Has anyone they know had a cosmetic procedure? Do they talk about it, what do they say?
- In relation to the **various media**, we will explore these, looking (as relevant) at materials that the girls have brought along
  - Magazines – which ones? What kind of information – features, celebrity profiles, ads; who buys these – is it themselves or a family member/ friend etc? What kind of stories/ articles do they like/dislike and why?
  - Websites – which ones, how did they come across these (by chance, search, suggested by a friend etc.) Any sites they've come across that they particularly like/dislike and why?
  - TV programmes – which ones, how often do they watch them (are they avid or occasional followers?) What do they like about them? Are there any that they don't like – why is that?
- In relation to **advertising**, have any ads stood out to them? This could be on the radio, TV, magazines, websites etc. Which ones, any particular features they have noticed (could be what is on offer or the style of the ad)? Who do they feel the ads are aimed at? Do they find any of the ads particularly appealing – in what way? Are there any that they really dislike – why is that?
- We will cover here any ads that they have seen on the **social networking sites** they use including any that appear on their own page – also why they think they might have appeared there (probe for whether the ads seem to have appeared after a related search/ viewing of websites).
- Looking back over all the sources of information that have been particularly important in them finding out about cosmetic procedures, are there some they would look to/trust more/less? Which do they feel that influence their age group more/less? Are there sources that they feel have particularly added to their knowledge/interest/awareness of this area, which/why?

## Messages given about cosmetic procedures - 15

- Looking across **all the sources of information**, what impression do they give about cosmetic procedures? We will ask the girls what they think first and then prompt on what messages are being communicated about
  - availability – are cosmetic procedure for just a few (who) or available to everyone
  - why someone might want to consider having a cosmetic procedure
  - whether it's a big decision to have a cosmetic procedure or not
  - the cost of having a cosmetic procedure
  - the safety of cosmetic procedures (how safe/unsafe do they think they are?)

We will encourage them to differentiate between different types of procedures as relevant (using the cards if they wish). What messages are being communicated and how is this done?

- Thinking about themselves and their age group, do they think these messages could have an effect on them? How might it make them feel?
- Can they imagine they could influence girls of their age to think about having a cosmetic procedure? What kinds of girls might be most influenced?
- Can they imagine that these sorts of messages might put pressure on girls or women to have a cosmetic procedure – in what way?

## Targeted marketing - 15

**As relevant, we will now ask the girls to show us any examples of marketing (letters, emails, texts) that have been aimed at them personally.**

- We will explore (in a sensitive way) when they received it, whether it was a one-off or something they have received on more than one occasion/regularly, why they think they have been sent it (was it sent at random or perhaps because they asked for information), whether they know anything about the sender/ what they know
- We will look at the content of any communications – what do they see as their purpose, what are the senders trying to do?
- What was their reaction when they got them? Did they respond in any way, did they show it to anyone else, talk to anyone else about it – who, why, do they know if their friends get similar communications, is it something they discuss, what do they say?
- How has it/might it influence them, have their perceptions changed in any way as a result? Has it added anything to their knowledge or made them feel differently about these procedures?
- How do they feel about people like this sending these things to girls of their age? We will explore any positives and negatives of this.

## Safeguarding young people - 5

We will explain that one of the things the Department of Health is concerned about is whether members of the public and young people in particular, are sufficiently protected when it comes to cosmetic procedures or whether more measures need to be taken – for example, in terms of what they are told about cosmetic procedures and how they are told it.

- Do they think that there should be more measures in place to protect young people, for example, from receiving the sorts of personal communications we have been discussing? Why/ why not?
- Are there other things that could be done to protect young people? What do they need protecting from? How might this be done?