

Body Rub Centres - Annual Update

Recommendation

That the September 18, 2019, Citizen Services report CR_7388, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the June 19, 2017, Community and Public Services Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide an annual report on metrics and outcomes including harm reduction in the body rub centres.

Executive Summary

The Body Rub Centres Task Force Implementation Team was established in 2016 and continues to make significant gains enhancing harm reduction and physical safety within licensed body rub centres.

All 26 recommendations from the Body Rub Centres Task Force Final Report (2015) have been implemented and embedded into ongoing business operations. Enforcement checks completed on licensed body rub practitioners observed 99 percent compliance. In addition, Administration continues to implement further strategies to increase compliance in other adult entertainment licence categories.

Report

In fall 2016, Administration established the Body Rub Centres Task Force Implementation Team consisting of two municipal enforcement officers and one community safety liaison. Between May 1, 2018, and April 30, 2019, the work of the team has focused on four priority areas:

1. Ensure the effective implementation and ongoing maintenance of the 26 Body Rub Centres Task Force recommendations approved by City Council in 2015
2. Implement further actions that enhance harm reduction in body rub centres
3. Increase licensing compliance within the larger adult entertainment sector
4. Increase licensing compliance and liaise with other relevant enforcement and support agencies to address concerns of improperly licensed adult entertainment facilities (e.g. health enhancement centres operating as body rub centres)

Priority Area Results for the Period May 1, 2018 to April 30, 2019

1. *Ensure the effective implementation and ongoing maintenance of the 26 Body Rub Centres Task Force recommendations approved by City Council in 2015*

All recommendations have been implemented and embedded in ongoing operations (Attachment 1).

2. *Implement further actions that enhance harm reduction in body rub centres*

The Body Rub Centres Task Force Implementation Team continues to provide information to practitioners on how to access support services and other pathways out of the industry. The community safety liaison is a single point of contact to connect practitioners to support services.

The community safety liaison conducted outreach to body rub centres with the following results:

- Visited a total of 106 centres (224 individual practitioners). Fifty percent of centre visits resulted in at least one follow-up or referral service being requested by practitioners.
- Supported 23 individual practitioners through partnership with an interpreter from The Family Centre. This helped address language barriers, promoted relationship building, improved understanding of regulations within the industry, and provided an opportunity to educate on safety measures, safe practices and community resources.
- Collaborated with community organizations including Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, Compass, StreetWorks, ASSIST Community Services, and The Family Centre, to promote an integrated response to implement harm reduction strategies. Examples of strategies implemented include the promotion of the Aware360 Safety app to improve safety when practitioners are working, referrals to The Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation when practitioners want to leave the industry or need support to stay safe and healthy within the industry, and provision of overdose prevention and Naloxone kit education and training.
- Conducted 27 business licence information sessions (175 participants). Following the sessions, 128 practitioners signed up to receive regular updates on resources and services related to the industry in the areas of health, financial empowerment, legislation and safety.

Additional harm reduction efforts in licensed body rub centres include:

- Providing client behaviour expectation posters to all licensed body rub centres
- Updating City bylaw poster with emergency contact information and support phone numbers
- Supporting the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation in promotion of the Safety Alert app

3. *Increase licensing compliance within the larger adult entertainment sector*

Body Rub Centres: Current licences: 32

Municipal enforcement officers have conducted investigations in body rub centres with the following results:

- Conducted a total of 193 body rub centre inspections and 461 body rub practitioner checks
- 10 follow-up referrals to the community safety liaison
- Four violation tickets issued to body rub centre owners for contravening a condition of the business licence

Body Rub Practitioner: Current licences: 322

The Body Rub Centres Task Force Implementation Team encountered two unlicensed practitioners within the past year and worked with the individual to gain compliance and their licence. As in previous years, compliance rates remain high, 99 percent of practitioners in compliance.

Escort Agency (Independent): Current licences: 79

Of the current licences, 57 have been obtained since the licence fee dropped to \$0 in December 2017. Regular contact is made with escorts not displaying a City licence number on advertisements to ensure they are aware of the bylaw requirements, encourage compliance, and offer connections to supports as needed.

Escort Agency: Current licences: 3

Three Escort Agency licences have been issued since the licence fee for this category was dropped to \$630 in September 2018.

4. *Increase licensing compliance and liaise with other relevant enforcement and support agencies to address concerns of improperly licensed adult entertainment facilities (e.g. health enhancement centres operating as body rub centres).*

The implementation team increased its focus on health enhancement centres suspected of acting as body rub centres with health enhancement practitioners offering the services of body rub practitioners.

The implementation team hosted an educational meeting with The Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta in November 2018 for all four massage therapy associations. A follow-up meeting was held in June 2019 to develop an action plan and explore harm reduction actions. The implementation team also attends quarterly Enforcement Collaboration Team meetings hosted by The Action Coalition on Human Trafficking Alberta, along with the following agencies:

- Edmonton Police Service Human Trafficking and Exploitation Unit
- Criminal Intelligence Service of Alberta

- RCMP KARE
- Government of Alberta, Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory Office
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
- Government of Alberta, Consumer Investigations Unit
- Public Prosecution Service of Canada

The implementation team will present at registered massage therapy association annual general meetings throughout 2019, as well as massage therapy training schools to equip new therapists with skills and supports in case of an incident.

Municipal enforcement officers have increased inspections at health enhancement centres to gather information, support potentially vulnerable workers, and collaborate on investigations with other law enforcement agencies.

The community safety liaison has focused on increasing awareness to mitigate the potential increased risk of sexual violence. The liaison has engaged in ongoing conversations with registered massage therapy associations to support them in addressing these concerns through policy and practice amendments. Associations have begun implementing policies including member knowledge testing and improved inter-association communications to ensure the integrity of their memberships and thus the City's health enhancement licensing system.

The implementation team has enhanced physical safety and harm reduction efforts in body rub centres and increased the licensing of body rub centres and practitioners. Administration will continue to advance this work through licensing, regular inspections, outreach and education, and partnerships with Edmonton Police Service, other orders of government, and community agencies.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Body Rub centres are in compliance and harm reduction tactics are applied at the centres.	Compliance rate of licensed Body Rub Practitioners.	2018/2019: 99 percent 2017/2018: 99 percent	100 percent
	Percent of licensed Body Rub Centres in compliance with the centre control plans	2018/2019: 95 percent 2017/2018: 95 percent	100 percent
	Percent of licensed Body Rub Centres visited by implementation team on a quarterly basis.	2018/2019: 100 percent 2017/2018: 100 percent	100 percent

Attachments

1. Body Rub Centres Task Force Recommendation Implementation

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- A. Laughlin, Acting Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- B. Andriachuck, City Solicitor