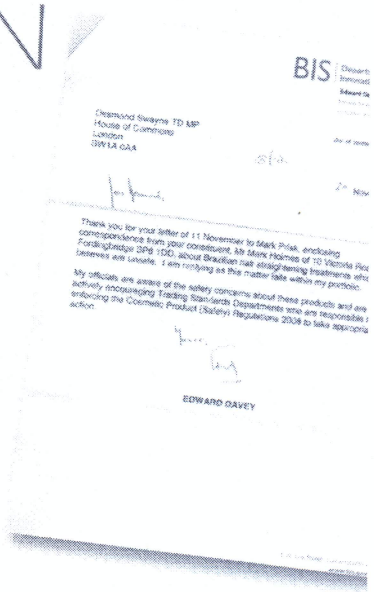
TRADING WATCHDOGS TO CRACK DOWN ON STRAIGHTENERS

Exclusive by **Andrew Don**


BIS

Desmond Swayne TD MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your letter of 11 November to Mark Prisk, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Mr Mark Holmes of 10 Victoria Pla Ferndlingbridge SP6 1DD, about Brazilian hair straightening treatments whic believes are unsafe. I am replying as this matter falls within my portfolio.

My officials are aware of the safety concerns about these products and are actively encouraging Trading Standards Departments who are responsible f enforcing the Cosmetic Product (Safety) Regulations 2008 to take appropria action.

EDWARD DAVEY

London trading standards officers led by **Hammersmith & Fulham Council** are launching a major crackdown on salons that use illegal chemical hair-straightening products.

The **North West London Safety Group**, which as well as Hammersmith & Fulham includes **Barnet, Brent, Haringey, Ealing** and **Enfield** trading standards, plans to meet later this month with a view to launching a full-scale investigation from April into salons that use products that contain or release more than 0.02 per cent of formaldehyde, which is the legal European limit for this potentially lethal ingredient.

Hammersmith & Fulham said it would combine its investigation with guidance to salons about the legal limits for formaldehyde, which all NHF members should be aware of through the lead *SalonFocus* has provided in terms of coverage.


EDWARD DAVEY: CALL FOR ACTION

News the issue is being taken seriously will come as a relief to people such as **Mark Holmes**, managing director of **TCQ Nanoscientific**, and **Christopher Flower**, director-general of the **Cosmetic, Toiletry & Perfumery Association**, who have both tried to get local and central government to sit up and take notice.

The London authorities appear to have been prompted to act after the **Department for Business Innovation and Skills** (BIS) waded into the debate, beseeching local authorities to take "appropriate action".

Edward Davey, minister for employment relations, consumer and postal affairs, wrote to **Desmond Swayne**, Conservative MP for New Forest West, who told him some products banned under European Union (EU) regulations were being illegally imported and sold to the trade.

The MP acted when TCQ Nanoscientific's Mark Holmes wrote to him "out of desperation" that **Rapex** (Rapid Alert System for Non-Food Products) warnings had been issued on several chemical hair-straightening products but the UK seemed to be ignoring them "and therefore the health and wellbeing of UK salon staff and indeed their clients, is being compromised".

Desmond told *SalonFocus*: "The potential danger of some of these products is very worrying. When my constituent raised it with me I thought it important to draw it to the attention of ministers."

SalonFocus has previously highlighted buck-passing between trading standards, environmental health and the **Health and Safety Executive**, all of which have responsibility for different elements, and the effect of spending cuts on enforcement (*SalonFocus*, January/February 2011).

The BIS minister replied to Desmond Swayne that his officials were "aware of the safety concerns about these products and are actively encouraging trading standards departments... to take appropriate action".

Janis Wilderspin, solicitor and principal of **Jones Wright Legal**, is looking into the potential of a class action on behalf of some clients but said she needed to establish whether there had been "a significant number" of hairdressers who had suffered "permanent damage or loss".

She said: "I have certainly seen information that leads me to believe that in other countries there are class actions beginning, and I am aware of the alleged dangers associated with such products."

The temperature has risen in France where **Afssaps**, the country's health authority, has issued a warning about products that it says contain high levels of formaldehyde, and it has removed several from the market.

Its investigation with the **Director General for Competition, Consumption and Repression of Fraud** revealed the presence of formaldehyde at concentrations 0.61 per cent-5.87 per cent. The legal limit in European countries is 0.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, new products continue to be launched in the UK. Celebrity hairdresser **Daniel Field** described one of them, **KeraSpa**, as "definitely formaldehyde free".

KeraSpa said two amino acids, combined to form proteins that structurally changed the hair. Field said: "You could describe it as second-generation keratin treatment rather like our **Kebelo**."

Another called **Brocato Curlinterrupted** also claims to be 100 per cent formaldehyde free and does not release any type of gas.

The Brocato website, www.brocato.co.uk, includes a letter from **Aveda** to salons encouraging them to look into the formaldehyde issue themselves because "we became aware of products and services... being used in our network that we feel to not align with Aveda's mission".