



PRESS RELEASE
SURVEY
BACK-TO-SCHOOL 2011

The Society of Shoe Fitters is extremely concerned at the increased number of children being referred to Podiatrists and G.P.'s. Retailers have reported seeing far more serious foot health problems than ever before i.e. Hallux Valgus, Ankle Valgus, heel bumps and Plantar Fasciitis etc. in children, and are tentatively referring children for treatment.

"Shops are seeing some dreadful feet and the start of acute health issues more associated with the elderly" says Laura West, Secretary of the SSF. "This does not bode well for the nation's health in general, as sore feet affect the way we walk, and this in turn can affect our entire physiology." Legs, knees, back and neck pain – even migraine can all be attributed to the way we walk and ill-fitting footwear.

"Sadly there is no legal obligation for anyone selling shoes to know anything about feet or footwear - but there is a moral obligation!" says Laura. "Hairdressers, Tattooists, Nail Bars, Masseuse etc. all have government legislation to ensure that staff has a certain level of knowledge and qualification, but the footwear industry has never been regulated or received sufficient support." "It would be impossible for a shop to be held responsible for a foot problem as the public buy numerous shoes from numerous outlets, but it is vital that staff are capable of giving advice and able to spot a problem occurring".

So what does the Society of Shoe Fitters think has changed or perceive the problem to be? "There are some fantastic independent and multiple retailers who are responsible and do know what they are doing, but most of the problems are due to the lack of hands-on fitting. Shoes are often sold 'self-service' in supermarkets, markets and worse still online (as they are less likely to be returned) and copies of good quality footwear are often copied using cheaply made easily accessible fashion footwear from clothing outlets. Younger children insist on wearing the latest fashion which is not suitable for their age, and they (and their parents) have no idea that they are actually storing up long term damage to their feet."

Society member Professor Wesley Vernon OBE has suggested that shops may like to record the problems they are seeing to allow the SSF to present this to government. They are asking all shoe shops to monitor very simply what they see from August – September during the busy back-to-school period. A form can be downloaded from the SSF website. "It is time shops stood together to stress the importance of fitting - regardless of being SSF qualified or not" said Laura. If you would like to be a part of this survey go to www.shoefitters-uk.org. Download the form and return it to the SSF office by the end of September.