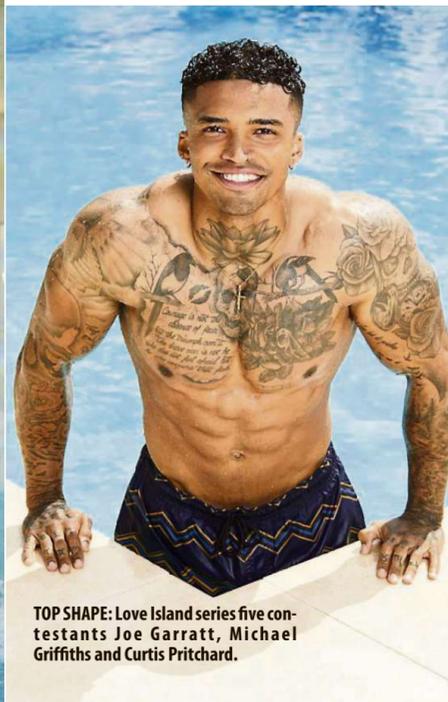


With *Love Island* promoting the perfect, groomed body, **Deirdre Reynolds** looks at the growing pressure on men to look their Instagram best



TOP SHAPE: *Love Island* series five contestants Joe Garratt, Michael Griffiths and Curtis Pritchard.



Love Island returned to ITV2 this week, with Meath scientist Yewande Biala and Manchester boxer Tommy Fury among the 12 singletons set to crack on and mug off over the next seven weeks.

Behind the scenes of the sun-drenched Majorcan villa, however, it's the hard-working waxists and tanning technicians who could once more prove the true stars of the 'constructed reality' TV show — and that's just the male contestants.

Despite criticism over the lack of body diversity among the contestants on the BAFTA-winning series, which also features *Dancing with the Stars* professional Curtis Pritchard, already the *Love Island* effect has trickled down to male grooming salons here.

"In terms of treatments and trends, at the moment the eyebrows seem to be a huge thing," says Stephen McEvoy, owner of Stephen Thomas Male Grooming in Dublin. "And I think a lot of that stems from social media."

"I had a guy actually come in the other day and ask me to do his eyebrows like Chris [Hughes] from *Love Island*."

"Straight off the bat I said, 'You don't have eyebrows like his — they're nothing like his, so unless you're willing to go through a whole process of getting your eyebrows tattooed, forget about it!'"

Being less *Love Island* than Craggy Island is unlikely to stop more image-conscious Irish men from rivalling their girlfriends in the defuzzing stakes as the mercury rises this summer.

A male Hollywood wax (€70), Speedo-line wax (€40) and full body wax (€200) are just some of the other hair removal treatments currently in hot demand at the Dame Street salon.

McEvoy has offered the same waxing service since he opened his business 15 years ago but has noticed that customers are now "more open about it".

"Also, I'm having people come in to me now who are much younger — most of my demographic over the last 10-15 years has been 30-plus because of the cost of treatments. The majority of my new clients only get waxing done if they're going away on holiday," adds Stephen, who has a strict over-21s policy on intimate waxing.

"Then you've got lifestyle waxers who are just people who prefer their body without hair, and they make up the bulk of the waxing that I do here."

But for men who want to keep their facial hair in check, there is a growing demand for getting beards defined with wax. "You get a lot of men with beards who want you to remove any hair on the upper cheek that's not quite full — if there's any hair just underneath the hairline, they get that waxed as well."

Buff, bronzed and bearded, Karl Bowe certainly has the *Love Island* look down to a fine art.

Catching up with *Feelgood*, the former Mr Ireland revealed how he tried out for the fifth season of the dating show, presented by Caroline Flack, but was unfortunately not selected.

"I haven't really told many people this, but I actually had an audition for *Love Island* a couple of months ago," says the model, actor and presenter from Dublin. "It's definitely something that I would



Karl Bowe: Auditioned for the latest series of *Love Island*.

be interested in for sure. It's about playing the waiting game."

Regular workouts, a bi-monthly trip to the barbers and self-tanning are just some of the measures taken by the 30-year-old to ensure he's reality TV-ready should the text come.

"I would very much take care of my appearance," admits Karl, who spends up to €60 a month on maintaining his photogenicity. "I get the odd facial just to mind the skin."

"I get the hair done every two weeks and get the eyebrows done once a month maybe."

"I'd have no problem waxing the chest as well — I'd be very hairy, but it's good to just give your body that little bit of fresh air. I used to do a lot of sunbeds, but then obviously you hear stories about sunbeds and what they can do to you, so now I'm more into spray tanning, just to be on the safe side. I'd only do it if there was a job coming up or something."

"I used to be very clean shaven," he adds, "but as I've gotten a bit older, I'm letting the beard grow. Sometimes I actually use a little bit of mascara just to go over a few little patchy bits just to enhance it."

"I never had any Botox done — I don't think I would, but if down the line I felt unhappy with something, who knows."

Love Island runner-up Megan Barton-Hanson isn't the only one to get a little help after reportedly spending more than €28,000 on

cosmetic enhancements to achieve her curvy appearance made famous on last year's show.

At Venus Medical in Dundrum, the anti-ageing injectable (starting from €290) and 'man boob' removal (starting from €4,000) are also the most sought-after procedures among men aged 30-55.

"It was always maybe 10% (men)," says Dr Peter Prendergast of his clientele at the award-winning south Dublin clinic. "Now it's probably 15% men and 85% women."

"The number one treatment still for men would be Botox for smoothing away crow's feet and

frown lines. The second complaint would be under-eye shadows or hollows, and for that we use non-permanent filler, so hyaluronic acid fillers that last about a year to a year and a half."

"For the body, the number one by far is the male chest reduction, or 'man boobs'."

"It's either gynecomastia, which is male breast tissue, or it's something called pseudogynecomastia, which is more fat than breast tissue, or it's a combination of both — either way, you have to surgically remove it."

Gynecomastia is very common, Dr Prendergast says of the hormonal imbalance, typically starting in puberty. "Probably one in three men have some degree of it."

"Some of them are suffering for years with it — they won't go to the beach or take their top off because they're embarrassed. It could be years before they pluck up the courage to actually come in."

"We use Vaser (liposuction), which melts the fat and tissue, combined with a small incision or surgically remove the glands through a tiny incision around the nipple. It's done under local anaesthetic and takes about an hour, so you can walk out."

Ahead of International Men's Health Week starting on Monday, meanwhile, experts are reminding young men to focus on self-care and not just skincare, after a survey by the UK's Mental Health

"I would very much take care of my appearance. I get the odd facial to mind the skin. I get the hair done every two weeks

Foundation found 24% of 18-24 year-olds thought more negatively about their body after bingeing on reality TV.

Love Island bosses this year vowed greater psychological after-care for contestants after series three star Mike Thalassitis tragically took his life in March aged 26, just nine months after series two star Sophie Gradon died by suicide aged 30.

"There has been an enormous amount of discussion in the news over the last year or two around aftercare and mental health care of contestants taking part in these programmes," says Jennifer Griffin of Turn2Me.org, a free online mental health service for adults funded by the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention. "And that's actually for a very understandable reason in terms of the pressure that they had been feeling and put under."

When we start to put all of our sense of identity and our sense of worth and value in how we look, who we're in a relationship with or what we're eating or how much we're exercising, she says "we're missing the vast majority of aspects of who we are as a person."

Relationships and sexuality, and by association body image, are among the most common themes raised by young male users of the service, according to the psychotherapist, who says she's not surprised by the research on how watching *Love Island* can heighten body anxiety.

"It would be completely natural and normal for them to be affected in that way because actually there's a huge amount of research to demonstrate the impact on programmes of this kind and imagery of this kind on our sense of self. Especially as a young man, their identities are still in development and still forming."

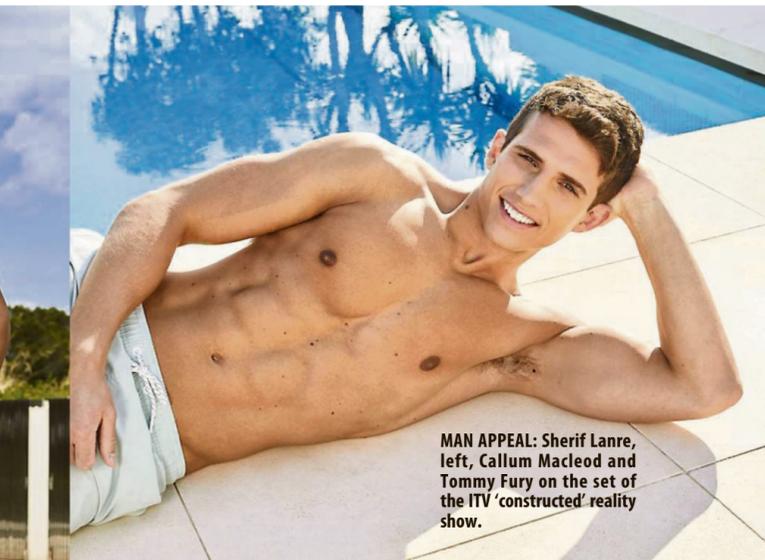
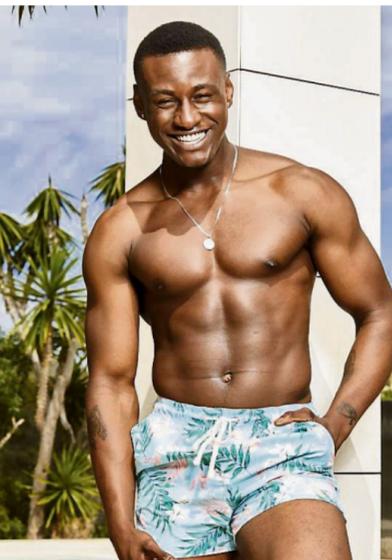
And if men are feeling just not quite themselves, then it's important, she says, that they take proactive steps.

"Come forwards either anonymously online, or you can go to face-to-face services as well."

"The advice that we always give is for all of us to take a balanced view of what is meaningful in life, and what gives us a sense of purpose and a sense of wellbeing and joy in life, and of course, physicality and being healthy and sexually attractive and active is part of that — but it's only one small part."

"There's so much more that men have to give to themselves, to their partners and to friends and to the society that we're in than how they look."

Hair we go again



MAN APPEAL: Sherif Lanre, left, Callum Macleod and Tommy Fury on the set of the ITV 'constructed' reality show.



Groom to improve

■ Love Island's Anton Danylyuk isn't the only one with brows on fleek this summer, with waxing, threading and tinting, typically starting from €10, among the most in-demand 'guy brow' treatments.

■ Sweating buckets in the Majorcan sunshine? Non-invasive miraDry treatment — which blitzes the sweat glands and costs upwards of €1,500

— is the top choice for men mortified by hyperhidrosis.

■ At 28, *Love Island* elder Callum Macleod probably doesn't have too many wrinkles, but Botox, which famously freezes the muscles in the face for up to six months is helping others remain 'bevs' for longer, from

about €250. ■ No need to hide the Fake Bake, as Irish men are instead turning to more gradual 'glow' skincare products such as Decléor Green Mandarin Sun-kissed Cream, priced €65, to develop a *Love Island* luminosity this summer.

