

## Question:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to the enforcement of the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and associated regulations.

For the period from 1 May 2012 to the present date, I would be grateful if you could provide the following information:

1. The number of commercial sunbed premises within your area that have been inspected by the Council.
2. The number of inspections undertaken each year.
3. The number of test purchasing exercises undertaken to assess compliance with age restrictions.
4. The number of occasions on which underage access or use of a sunbed was identified.
5. The number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued under the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and associated regulations, broken down by year and offence where possible.
6. The number of Improvement Notices or equivalent enforcement notices issued.
7. The number of prosecutions commenced under the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and associated regulations.
8. The number of successful prosecutions secured.
9. Details of the offence(s) involved in each prosecution.
10. Any reports, reviews, audits or evaluations undertaken by the Council regarding:
  - compliance with the legislation;
  - effectiveness of the legislation;
  - trends in underage use;
  - trends in operator compliance.
11. Any data held regarding the number of commercial sunbed premises operating within your area by year since 2012.

## Response:

The Department has carefully considered your request. A search of electronic records using keywords related to your request has identified 7800 records. It is estimated that the time required to comply with your request would exceed the statutory cost limit. Section 12 of the FOIA therefore applies.

In addition, councils conduct test purchasing activities within their own yearly schedules, therefore any data the Department of Health has at any one point throughout the year cannot be considered as an accurate representation of the work undertaken in all council areas for the reporting year in question. We would therefore suggest that you contact the councils directly to provide up to date or more accurate data for the information and timelines you are seeking. We would particularly advise you to seek information directly from Councils regarding any reports, reviews, audits or evaluations undertaken by the Council.

However, under Annex A, we have provided some information that you may find beneficial and is publicly available via the Health Survey Northern Ireland, the Young Person's Behaviour and Attitude Survey, the NI Assembly website, and the recently released COMARE report.

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## Publicly available information

Trends on sunbed use can be found in the Health Survey Northern Ireland (HSNI) which runs every year on a continuous basis. The HSNI survey covers a range of health topics that are important to the lives of people in Northern Ireland today and covers respondents aged 16 years and over. Due to the size of the survey, it is not possible to include the Care in the Sun module (which contains questions on sunbed use) every year. Available Care in the Sun module tables containing sunbed use responses can be found at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/tables-health-survey-northern-ireland>. We would advise you to access the full reports of these surveys to consider any caveats which may have been included about survey sample sizes and responses which may have been weighted by age-group and sex in order to better reflect the composition of the general population of Northern Ireland.

Further trends of sunbed use in young people can also be found through questions asked in the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey (YPBAS). YPBAS is a school-based survey conducted among 11-16 year-olds. It is an inter-departmental survey that covers a range of topics relevant to the lives of young people today and is conducted every three years. Questions about sunbed use were asked in 2019 and 2022 and relevant information relating to this survey can be found at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/young-persons-behaviour-and-attitudes-survey-2022-care-sun-data-tables>

Both these surveys are asking the Care in the Sun module questions this year and the results of that should be available to the public in the Autumn of 2026.

## Assembly Questions

You may also wish to consider conducting searches on the Northern Ireland Assembly website through Assembly Question responses (AQs) which may contain further information pertinent to your request. This can be done through the Assembly Website and the link for the AQ search pages is as follows: <https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/search.aspx>. The search can be conducted year by year, by MLA (or all), and by using keywords – for example 'sunbed'.

## Other information

You may also wish to look at the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) Twenty-first report - *Health effects of ultraviolet radiation from artificial tanning devices in the UK and their control*, which was published in June 2026 and can be accessed via the following link: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a1d9f28050971fbeb3bcd7/committee-on-medical-aspects-21st-report.pdf>