



Information Governance Team

Postal Address:
Coventry City Council
PO Box 7097
Coventry
CV6 9SL

www.coventry.gov.uk

E-mail: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

Phone: 024 7697 5408

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Dear Sir/Madam

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Request ID: FOI676644662

Thank you for your request for information relating to Skin Whitening Seizures.

You have requested the following information:

I'm interested in data on skin lightening/whitening/bleaching products that have been seized by the council's trading standards team in the calendar years between 2014 and the end of 2024.

1. The number of complaints and reports received about skin lightening/ whitening /bleaching products for each year from 2014 to 31st December 2024.

In response to Question 1, we confirm we hold the information which you have asked for, but we have estimated that the cost of meeting your request would exceed the cost limit of £450 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees Regulations 2004). This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours or more, in determining whether the information is held, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The requested information is not held in a reportable format. In order to collate the information you require, it will require an officer to read through all the complaints from the time period and manually locate and retrieve which will exceed 18 hours. This part of your request has therefore been refused under section 12(2) of the Act.

2. The number of seizures of skin lightening/ whitening /bleaching products conducted by the council for each year from 2014 to 31st December 2024.

Coventry has been affected by the supply of these products to a lesser degree than some of the

largest cities within the United Kingdom. This may be due to the demographics of our population. Despite constant surveillance through visits to likely retailers, there has only ever been one seizure of such products in 2022.

3. For each seizure, if possible:

a. The reason for the seizure (e.g., whether the products were illegal, harmful, misleading or something else)

The seizure in 2022 was made because of an apparent labelling non-compliance (ingredients list required by the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations), which caused concern that dangerous ingredients may be present in the composition. The labelling non-compliance and fears around composition gave grounds for the seizure.

b. The number and street value (£) of products seized.

In response to Question 3b, we confirm we do not hold this information and informing you as per Section 1(1) of the Act. We confirm we do not hold the specific number and street value of the seized products. This information is unknown as the typical retail price is unclear.

However, in order to undertake our obligation to advise and assist you, we can confirm the number of items was in the dozens and the corresponding value would therefore be in the low hundreds.

c. Whether a fine was issued or if prosecution occurred.

The seized items were voluntarily signed over to the service area, and this combined with the issuing of a formal warning letter (plus training and advice on product safety) concluded the matter.

d. The ingredients of the products seized (e.g., hydroquinone, mercury, bleach, glutathione).

The items were sent for testing but were found not to include the aforementioned ingredient(s). However, the seized items were still non-compliant as they did not display the requisite labelling.

e. The brand name(s) of the products seized.

In response to Question 3e, we confirm we do not hold this information and informing you as per Section 1(1) of the Act. The seized items were signed over to the service area, and once the title of the goods had been passed to us, the items were promptly disposed of. We can confirm that only the general product description is held.

f. The form of the products seized (e.g., topical, intravenous, or another form).

The seized items were small tins of aqueous topical cream, primarily intended as a moisturiser.

The supply of information in response to a FOI request does not confer an automatic right to re-use the information. You can use any information supplied for the purposes of private study and non-commercial research without requiring further permission. Similarly, information supplied can also be re-used for the purposes of news reporting. An exception to this is photographs. Please contact us if you wish to use the information for any other purpose.

For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance