UK Health Security Agency

UK Report of National Optical Radiation Activities in 2025-26

Report to WHO International Advisory Committee, June 2026

About the UK Health Security Agency

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases, and environmental hazards, to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. We provide scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

UKHSA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Recent Development

Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE)

COMARE is the UK's independent scientific expert committee that advises Government on the health effects of radiation, both ionising and non-ionising[1]. In April 2025, COMARE set up the Light and Health Subcommittee (LAHS) to review the available evidence regarding the impact of artificial light on human health and determine what is known and what further information is required to provide evidence-based guidelines regarding the impact of artificial light on human health within the built environment. This possibility was set out in the 2023 Government response to the House of Lords' Science and Technology Select Committee's published report on the inquiry into the impact of noise and light pollution on human health[2].

COMARE published its 13th report, a report on the health effects and risks arising from sunbeds, in 2009[3]. This report included a chapter on sunbed use in the UK and informed the 2010 Sunbeds (Regulation) Act. In November 2024, the Department of Health and Social Care commissioned COMARE to consider the available evidence relating to the use of sunbeds in the UK. The committee proposed to update the 13th COMARE report, which was approved. The UV Sunbeds Subcommittee (USS) met twice up to March 2026 and the report is now awaiting publication.

Details of the various COMARE subcommittees and working groups and the current work programme are available from the COMARE webpage[1].

National Cancer Plan for England (2026)

In February, the National Cancer Plan for England was published[4]. It outlined action plans to prevent cancers, including skin cancers. The government will consult on strengthening existing safeguards under the Sunbeds Act (2010) in England[5] by mandating safety warnings, supervised use, and ID checks to enforce the law that no under-18s may use commercial sunbeds. Additionally, a call for evidence will be launched to understand whether further action to reduce cases of melanoma is justified.

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Beauty and Wellbeing (APPG) UV Safety report.

The APPG published *A preventable crisis: the case for a national UV safety strategy*[6] . The report makes recommendations, including strengthening regulations, improving UV safety public awareness from natural (sun) and artificial (sunbeds) sources and making sun protection more affordable and accessible.

Research activities related to optical radiation and health

UKHSA produced a paper on Assessment of nitric oxide release in vitro via low-level daylight-equivalent blue or red light irradiation[7]**.** The study contributed to a better understanding of the effect of realistic, low-level sunlight exposure of blue or red light on nitric oxide release in skin cells**.**

UKHSA produced a paper on Laser products entering the UK consumer market[8] which included the UKHSA's *Laser product information sheet: practical guide* which is designed to help local authorities and the public to identify unsafe laser products in the UK market[9].

Communication activities

UKHSA published an updated report, Living with Radiation[10], which provides information about protection from optical radiation from the sun and artificial sources aimed towards an informed but non-technical audience. The report also includes new content on indoor lighting and the importance of sunlight.

UKHSA updated the published Guidance *Beat the Heat: hot weather advice*[11] including *Protect yourself from the sun*[12] which relates to heat health alerts guidance.

The forecast of the UV Index, safety messages and advice on sun and health via short blog-style stories and accessible videos are communicated by the UK's national weather and climate service, the Meteorological Office (Met Office)[13]. UV Index data for UK locations are provided by the UK Health Security Agency and University of Manchester and displayed in near-real time to the public with an indication when sun protection is needed[14]. The UV Index and sun safety messages are also available on the SmartSun UV Global App[15] for the UK and many popular holiday destinations. Outreach activities have included presentations and interactive activities about the importance of UV protection and light exposure for health.