



Department of Health

request-335648-0a7844f0@whatdotheyknow.com

29 June 2016

Dear A Clerk

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA): INTERNAL REVIEW DH CASE REFERENCE IR-1035103/4

Thank you for your email dated 7 June in which you requested an Internal Review into the handling of your original request (FOI-1035103/4).

Chronology

You originally wrote to the Department of Health (the DH) to request the following:

“Please provide copies of any records in the past 12 months relating to consideration of policy on medicinal cannabis.

This should include correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports, evidence considered and any other records held.”

The DH replied to you on 2 June as follows:

“Thank you for your request of 19th May 2016 under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Your exact request was:

[See above for brevity]

I can confirm that the Department does not hold information relevant to your request.

The Department has not considered policy on medical cannabis within the last 12 months, but I can confirm that we have responded to correspondence and requests for information about medical cannabis.

The Government’s view is that cannabis in its raw form has no recognised medicinal value in the UK.

The status of cannabis as a schedule 1 substance does not preclude manufacturers from researching and developing cannabis-based medicines. Sativex, a cannabis-

based medicine for multiple sclerosis (MS) as well as other conditions, has been developed by GW Pharmaceuticals for the treatment of MS. Sativex has been fully considered by the relevant regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), has been licensed for use, and is available in the UK. Sativex contains two active cannabinoids, THC and cannabidiol, extracted from herbal cannabis in the manufacturing process. It is administered by oral spray. Other pharmaceuticals based on cannabis include Dronabinol, a synthetic cannabinoid used to treat MS and the nausea caused by chemotherapy and Nabilone, a synthetic cannabinoid used to treat the nausea caused by chemotherapy.

Any company can apply to the MHRA to test the safety of cannabis-based medicines they wish to market, but it will only be allowed for use by the public when the MHRA is satisfied that such a product is safe to use and following consultation with the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Head of the Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health
Room G18
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS
Email: freedomofinformation@dh.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Department. The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Internal Review

You subsequently wrote to the DH again on 7 June to request a review in the following terms:

“Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of Department of Health's handling of my FOI request 'Cannabis policy'.”

I have it on good authority that the records I requested are available.”

The Review

The Department of Health (the DH) has undertaken a review into the handling of your original request FOI-1035103/4.

The DH has now undertaken further extensive searches for the information you originally requested. Following those searches, I can now re-iterate that the DH does not hold information falling within scope of your request.

The review is now complete.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Department. The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
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Yours sincerely

TONY DOOLE
Senior Casework Manager
Freedom of Information