

With growing interest in medicinal cannabis across the UK, many patients exploring this treatment are turning to private clinics. A frequently asked question is whether it is normal—legal and safe—for private cannabis clinics to deliver cannabis medication directly to your doorstep. This blog post will unpack this issue by separating legality from market realities, looking at the NHS funding gap driving private demand, clarifying who can <https://todaynews.co.uk/2026/08/10/inside-the-uks-private-medical-cannabis-clinics-how-the-sector-actually-works/> prescribe medicinal cannabis, and examining regulation and oversight, particularly by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England.



Understanding Legality Versus Real-World Access

Medicinal cannabis was rescheduled in the UK in November 2018, meaning specialist doctors can legally prescribe cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPMs). However:

- **Legality:** Private prescriptions for cannabis are legal if issued by a specialist doctor on the General Medical Council (GMC) Specialist Register.
- **Access:** Despite legality, NHS prescriptions for cannabis remain very limited. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines are cautious, leading to very few NHS-funded prescriptions.

This creates a significant NHS funding gap. For many patients, private clinics are the only route to access medicinal cannabis products legally.

The NHS Funding Gap and the Rise of the Private Market

While the NHS permits medicinal cannabis prescriptions, access remains tightly controlled:

- **Restrictive Criteria:** NHS clinicians prescribe cannabis products primarily for rare, treatment-resistant epilepsies, severe spasticity from multiple sclerosis, or chemotherapy-induced nausea.
- **Limited Availability:** Most patients do not meet strict NHS criteria. Thus, private clinics meet demand from those willing and able to pay out-of-pocket.

The private market reality: Private cannabis clinics offer consultations—often via video—to assess patient eligibility. If appropriate, a prescription is issued for a cannabis-based product. To obtain this medication, patients typically rely on dispensing pharmacies authorised to supply cannabis medicines. This process often involves home delivery, which patients question in terms of normality and safety.

Who Can Prescribe Medicinal Cannabis?

Not every doctor can prescribe cannabis-based medication. UK law and GMC regulations specify:

- **Specialist Register Requirement:** Only doctors on the GMC Specialist Register with relevant experience may prescribe. This generally means consultants, such as neurologists, psychiatrists, or pain specialists.
- **Private Prescriptions:** This criterion applies equally in private practice. A cannabis prescription from a GP or non-specialist is not valid.

This is crucial to ensure treatments are appropriate, evidence-based, and monitored effectively. Clinics advertising “cannabis prescriptions” without named specialists or evidence of GMC registration should be treated with caution.

Video Consultations and Remote Prescribing in Private Cannabis Care

Technological advances have changed how private cannabis prescriptions are managed:

- **Video Consultations:** These allow specialists to assess patients remotely, widening access, especially for those with mobility or geographical limitations.
- **Remote Prescribing:** In England, remote prescribing through video consultations must be declared to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which regulates and inspects private healthcare providers.

This oversight ensures that remote consultations meet safety and quality standards. Patients using clinics registered with the CQC for remote prescribing can have higher confidence in clinical governance.

Regulation and CQC Oversight in England

Private cannabis clinics in England fall under the CQC’s remit if they provide regulated activities including remote prescribing. Key points:

- The clinic must register with the CQC and declare remote prescribing services.
- The CQC assesses safety, effectiveness, and patient experience as part of its inspections.
- Dispensing pharmacies delivering medicinal cannabis must also comply with Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) standards.

Patients should verify whether a private clinic is registered and inspected by the CQC. This adds a layer of reassurance and accountability.

Is It Normal for Private Cannabis Clinics to Deliver Medication to Your Door?

Home delivery of medicinal cannabis prescribed privately is increasingly common and generally legitimate when done properly. Here is what ‘normal’ delivery looks like:

1. Patient has a valid prescription from a GMC-registered specialist.
2. The prescription is fulfilled by a licensed dispensing pharmacy authorised by MHRA.

3. The pharmacy offers a secure, tracked delivery service ensuring medication arrives safely.
4. The clinic or pharmacy provides clear instructions for use, side effects, and follow-up arrangements.

Delivery directly to patients' homes is not only convenient but often necessary given the nature of medicinal cannabis products and patients' mobility or health conditions.

Common Mistakes to Watch Out For: Pricing Transparency

A frequent concern is the lack of upfront pricing information. Many clinics and pharmacies:

- Do not clearly state consultation fees before booking.
- Omit the price of the cannabis prescription or products, which can vary widely.
- Fail to mention additional charges—for example, repeat prescription services, delivery fees, or dispensing fees.

Patients should expect transparent, itemised pricing lists before committing to any private consultation or medication order. This transparency empowers informed decision-making and prevents unexpected costs.

Checklist: Ensuring Legitimate and Safe Private Cannabis Prescription and Delivery

Aspect What to Check Why It Matters
Doctor Credentials Is prescriber on GMC Specialist Register with relevant clinical specialty? Ensures prescribing is lawful and clinically appropriate.
Clinic Registration Is clinic registered with CQC and declared remote prescribing services? Provides oversight and guarantees minimum care standards.
Consultation Method Are video consultations standard and comply with regulations? Facilitates access while maintaining clinical governance.
Pricing Transparency Are consultation costs and medication prices clearly stated upfront? Avoids hidden fees and surprises.
Dispensing Pharmacy Is medication supplied by a licensed dispensing pharmacy compliant with MHRA? Ensures safe, quality-controlled medicines.
Delivery Service Is home delivery secure, reliable, and documented? Protects medication integrity and patient confidentiality.

Conclusion

Home delivery of private prescription medicinal cannabis is a growing, normal feature of the UK's private healthcare landscape, addressing a significant gap left by limited NHS access. When provided by GMC-registered specialists through CQC-registered clinics and dispensed by authorised pharmacies, delivery is legal, safe, and practical.

However, patients must remain vigilant. Transparent pricing, clear information on prescribing doctors, and verification of clinic and pharmacy credentials are essential to avoid pitfalls in a still-evolving market.



If you are considering private cannabis therapy, do your due diligence to ensure your medication journey is both legally compliant and clinically appropriate.