

## Access to Public Information Request

**Date of receipt:** 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Date of response:** 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019

### Information relating to the licencing of medicinal cannabis

#### **Additional information to provide context to the questions asked under this API request:**

**What is medicinal cannabis.** Medicinal cannabis is used to manage the symptoms of a medical condition. When we are talking about medicinal cannabis, we are talking about a product that is a pharmaceutical cannabis-derived medicine.

This is when a product has a set amount of THC or CBD, has been quality assured and has been granted a marketing licence for certain conditions by a medicines regulatory authority. For the Channel Islands this authority is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Home grown cannabis that is smoked or consumed at home is not classed as medicinal cannabis, even if the reason a person is using it is to help with a medical problem.

**When can medicinal cannabis be prescribed?** There are 5 conditions/circumstances that medicinal cannabis could be prescribed in Guernsey. They are:

- For muscle stiffness or tightness (spasticity) in people who have Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- For nausea and vomiting in people undergoing chemotherapy
- For people who have epilepsy which is resistant to other treatments
- For people with non-cancer chronic pain
- For people who are terminally ill receiving palliative care

**Current legislation:** In 2017, the strategic responsibility for the Drug and Alcohol Strategy was transferred from the Committee for Home Affairs to the Committee for Health & Social Care (HSC).

Following this transfer, in February 2018 HSC took the opportunity to amend the Misuse of Drugs (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 1974 (and associated amendments) in order to provide an exemption from various provisions in the law regarding the import, export, possession and supply of CBD products of a specified description. This was in recognition of the demand from Islanders to use such products for certain conditions. The exemptions for CBD products must not be confused with licensing requests for medicinal cannabis.

These amendments essentially mean that no license is required for any Islander who wishes to use CBD oil that meets the following conditions:

- Have its ingredients clearly labelled
- Contain an aggregate of not more than 3% cannabinal or cannabinal derivatives relative to its CBD content, by weight
- Not contain any other controlled drug
- Not contain any plant material visible to the naked eye

**Review of the current drug and alcohol strategy:** HSC has brought forward a review of the current drug and alcohol strategy, which was due to run to 2020, with a view to implementing a combined Substance Misuse Strategy in 2019. The terms of reference of this review include, amongst other things, a review of the evidence on the clinical effectiveness of medicinal cannabis.

A policy is already in place that means any licensed medicinal form of cannabis on the market will be included on Schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law if it is prescribed by a medical practitioner. Inclusion on the Schedule means that Guernsey can ensure properly licensed products are sourced, imported, prescribed and stored correctly. HSC's policy enables it to be nimble in responding to new products that become available globally.

In addition, the proposals announced in the UK in 2018 to set up a clinical group to review individual requests, following the Billy Caldwell case, replicates a process already in place in Guernsey.

### **Questions asked under API rules**

- 1. How many people between the first time the licence for cannabis was made available in Guernsey until April 2018 were granted a licence?**

HSC has received very few applications for licences for medicinal cannabis (under 5 in total). All have been considered by a panel of medical professionals and rejected as the arguments provided for their use were either not persuasive, or the clinical evidence was poor.

However a form of medicinal cannabis (Sativex) is already approved for the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis and a number of people in the Bailiwick receive this on prescription. These prescriptions are provided on the basis that these patients took part in a clinical trial for this drug. To remove access to this drug at the end of the trial period would have been unethical.

**2. What form of cannabis is available on licence? Is it cannabis oil and if so what kind? What is the THC and CBD content of the cannabis available under the licence? What quantity is available on the licence?**

The amendments to the Misuse of Drugs (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 1974 states the conditions that are necessary for CBD oil to be exempt from the various prohibitions in the law (see above).

With regard to medicinal cannabis that may be requested on license in the future, HSC will set the clinical indications for the use of medicinal cannabis. The percentage levels of what would be prescribed will depend on the nature of the patient's symptoms and the nature of their condition. Each person will respond to treatments differently so the quantities of what is available on the licence may vary.

Licenses for medicinal cannabis must not be confused with recent licenses granted to grow cannabis plants for the production of CBD Oil which is for the supplements market and cannot be marketed with any health claims.

**3. How long does it take on average for patients to receive cannabis oil, from the first point of contact with their doctor where the licence is sought, to receipt of the medication?**

Cannabis oil is not currently on the White List for prescribed drugs. As no requests have been approved we are unable to answer this question.

**4. What measures did the Health and Social Services Department take to educate doctors about the availability of the licence for cannabis?**

The use of cannabis has been discussed at a number of clinical forums and in the wider medical literature. This included discussion with both Primary and Secondary Care.

**5. What measures did the Health and Social Services Department take to make the public aware that a licence was available for cannabis?**

A number of press releases on the Committee's proposed plans were issued and covered widely by the local media. These press releases can be found at [www.gov.gg/news](http://www.gov.gg/news).

**6. What are the rates of acceptance and rejection of those who apply for a licence for medicinal cannabis on the island?**

See answer to question 1