

If you have spent any time reading the headlines in Today News or scrolling through social media, you have likely seen the confusion. Is it legal? Can I get it on the NHS? Why are there so many private clinics popping up? Let's cut through the noise: Yes, medical cannabis is legal in the UK, and it has been since November 2018. But legal access is not the <https://todaynews.co.uk/2026/04/16/private-medical-cannabis-clinics-what-uk-patients-actually-pay/> same as universal access. For the average patient, the legal reality is almost entirely defined by your ability to pay private fees.



What you will pay first

Before you even step into a virtual consultation room, you need to understand that "legal" does not mean "subsidised." The NHS rarely prescribes cannabis-based medicinal products (CBMPs). Consequently, the private market is where 99% of patients operate. Here is what you should expect to pay out of pocket before you hold a prescription in your hand:

- **Initial Specialist Consultation:** £50 – £150.
- **Follow-up Consultations:** £40 – £100 (typically required every 3 months).
- **Prescription/Admin Fees:** £20 – £50 per item (often hidden in the small print).
- **Medication Costs:** £150 – £400+ per month depending on dosage.
- **Delivery Fees (Secure Delivery):** £10 – £20 per dispatch.

The running list of hidden fees

In my 12 years covering healthcare pricing, I have kept a running tally of the "gotchas" that clinics often hide behind buzzwords like "bespoke care packages." Don't let these catch you off guard:

- **The "Multi-Script" Fee:** Some clinics charge per individual item prescribed rather than per consultation.
- **Repeat Prescription Admin:** Paying an extra £30 just to have a nurse sign off on a repeat order.
- **Pharmacy Dispensing Fees:** Some clinics force you to use a specific partner pharmacy that adds a markup on the medication price.
- **Discharge Fees:** The cost to have your records transferred if you decide the clinic isn't right for you.

The legal framework: Why 2018 didn't change everything

In 2018, the UK government moved cannabis from Schedule 1 to Schedule 2 under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations. This officially recognised the therapeutic value of cannabis. However, the legislation was written with extremely narrow parameters. It requires specialist supervision—meaning your average GP cannot write a prescription. Only doctors listed on the General Medical Council's specialist register can initiate treatment.

This is why you cannot walk into your local NHS surgery and ask for a prescription. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) maintains strict oversight on the safety and quality of these products, but the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the NHS remain incredibly restrictive. Currently, the NHS only provides access for a tiny fraction of patients with specific conditions, such as rare forms of epilepsy or MS-related spasticity.

The private clinic pathway: A step-by-step guide

Because the NHS is effectively closed off, the **private clinic pathway** has become the standard route for patients. Clinics like **Relief** and others provide a streamlined service, but the process is standardised across the industry. Here is exactly what happens at each step:

1. **Screening:** You provide medical records proving you have tried at least two previous licensed treatments for your condition. If you haven't "failed" two treatments, you will be rejected.
2. **Consultation:** A specialist doctor reviews your history. They assess whether your condition qualifies and discuss the potential risks versus benefits.
3. **Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Review:** By law, the doctor must present your case to an MDT. This is a group of clinicians who confirm the prescription is appropriate. This is a regulatory requirement to prevent over-prescription.
4. **Prescribing:** If approved, the electronic prescription is sent to a specialist pharmacy.
5. **Dispensing and Delivery:** The pharmacy charges you for the medication and the secure delivery fee. Your medication arrives via courier.

Why NHS access is so limited

Patients often feel let down by the NHS, but the problem isn't necessarily the doctors—it is the funding and the lack of robust clinical evidence required by NICE. The NHS operates on a model of high-volume, evidence-based medication. Cannabis is a complex plant, and standardising it for clinical trials has proven difficult. Without the level of evidence the NHS demands, funding simply isn't allocated. This leaves the private sector to fill the void, creating a two-tier system where wealth determines access to symptom relief.



Comparing the costs: A reality check

Patients need to look at the annual cost, not just the monthly bill. If you are starting this journey, use this table to forecast your spending:

Expense Type	Frequency	Estimated Cost (Annual)
Initial Consultation	Once	£100
Follow-up Consultations	Quarterly	£200 - £400
Medication	Monthly	£1,800 - £4,800
Delivery Fees	Monthly	£120 - £240
Total Estimated Yearly		£2,220 - £5,540

Don't fall for the fluff

When researching clinics, ignore any website that uses vague terms like "wellness journey" or "holistic health solutions" without linking directly to their price lists. Transparency is the hallmark of a reputable clinic. If a clinic makes it hard to find their fees, they are likely hiding the very costs that will make your treatment unsustainable in the long run.

Always check for:

- **Total Monthly Cost:** Does the price include the delivery fee? Does it include the pharmacy dispensing fee?
- **MDT Fee:** Is this charged separately, or is it hidden in the consultation price?
- **Consultation Frequency:** Are they charging you for an appointment every two months when standard practice is three?

Final thoughts for the patient

Is medical cannabis legal in the UK? Yes. Is it accessible? Only if you are prepared to navigate the private clinic pathway and pay the recurring costs. The system is designed for specialist supervision, which acts as a safeguard but also serves as a gatekeeper. Before you sign up with a provider, ensure you have a clear picture of your long-term financial commitment. Medical cannabis can be life-changing for many, but it is a significant medical expense that deserves the same scrutiny as any other private healthcare purchase.

Editor's Note: Always consult with your GP before starting any new treatment plan, even if you are accessing it privately. Your medical records must be accurate and up-to-date to ensure the safety of your cannabis treatment.