# RCPsych Review of Cannabis: medicinal cannabis and cannabis for recreational use

**Call for Evidence**

## **About the Review**

The Royal College of Psychiatrists is undertaking a review to develop a College position on:

* cannabis use in the UK and how this relates to mental health, incorporating evidence on the biological, psychological and social effects of cannabis
* the use of medicinal cannabis in relation to mental illness.

## **About this Call for Evidence**

RCPsych’s review is beginning its work by asking those with expertise and personal experience of medicinal cannabis and cannabis for recreational use to provide relevant evidence. Those who might wish to respond are:

* Academics with experience in these fields;
* patients/service users;
* carers and family members;
* members of staff in mental health services (NHS, independent, or voluntary);
* providers of mental health services (NHS, independent, or voluntary);
* charities or voluntary sector organisations with an interest in this area;
* individuals or organisations working in the criminal justice system;
* other relevant people, bodies or groups.

Responses will be used to inform our areas of inquiry and final reports.

**Please read carefully**

In completing this consultation, you should understand that your responses may be quoted and used in reports or other outputs from the College.

If you would like us to anonymise your response (i.e. so that you or your organisation cannot be identified in any reports or outputs), then please tick or mark this box: [ ]

## **What this consultation covers**

RCPsych’s review and this call for evidence cover two separate areas – recreational use of cannabis and medicinal cannabis.

The RCPsych’s review extends UK-wide, which will be the context in which it writes, though we are looking to collect all the relevant evidence internationally.

### Recreational cannabis

This consultation is looking to gather evidence on recreational cannabis use and will focus on the following topics:

* The prevalence and strength of cannabis used in the UK;
* what effects cannabis use has directly on the likelihood of people developing mental illness;
* criminalisation and marginalisation of cannabis users in the UK and the effects this has on people’s mental health;
* synthetic cannabis;
* why people start to smoke cannabis, where this leads them and why they continue or why they stop;
* effects of changes in services in the UK;
* global evidence of effects of different legal approaches;
* reducing mental health harms of cannabis use;
* priorities for research.

### Medicinal cannabis

This consultation is looking to gather evidence on medicinal cannabis and will focus on the following topics:

* Medicinal cannabis used to treat mental illness;
* Guidance for clinicians prescribing medicinal cannabis;
* Research needed on medicinal cannabis used to treat mental illness and the barriers to this research;
* Any links between the prescription of medicinal cannabis and the prevalence of recreational use;
* pathways in and out of cannabis for medicinal use.

## How to respond to this consultation

This consultation is looking to gain a clear perspective on what the evidence base is on both areas – we ask that people focus on firm evidence, and limit stating personal opinions as much as possible. Please do not feel you have to answer all the questions below – please limit your responses to what you consider to be your area of expertise and where you feel you can add value.

Please provide references wherever possible.

The below boxes are not sized to anticipate answers, please expand as required, do keep your answers as brief and as pertinent as possible.

**Please return a completed version of this form to** **policy@rcpsych.ac.uk** **by 5pm on Monday 10th June 2019.**

## **About you**

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| Name: |  |
| Organisation name (if responding on behalf of an organisation). |  |

## **Part1: Recreational Cannabis**

### Part 1A: Prevalence of cannabis in the UK

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| 1. What is the prevalence of recreational cannabis use in the UK? How has this changed over the past ten years?
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| 1. What evidence is there for the strength of cannabis used in the UK? How has this changed over the past ten years?
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| 1. What is the evidence on the regional differences of the prevalence and strength of cannabis in the UK?
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| 1. What evidence is there for presence of contaminants such as fentanyl in cannabis used in the UK? How has this changed over the past ten years? Are these trends replicated globally? Have different legal approaches around the world had an effect on these trends?
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### Part 1B: The link between cannabis and mental illness

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| 1. What evidence is there for a link between cannabis use and mental illness (psychosis and others)? What is the strength of the evidence? *When answering this question, please consider which individual components of cannabis are relevant and how other factors such as age, frequency of use, genetics etc. affect the levels of risk involved and specify the extent to which evidence points to causation or association.*
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### Part 1C: Criminalisation of cannabis

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| 1. What evidence is there on the extent to which laws criminalising cannabis-based activities are being enforced?  |
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| 1. What are the reasons for law enforcement’s attitudes to the criminalisation of cannabis?
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| 1. What evidence is there for the different ways people are affected following criminalisation?
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### Part 1D: Marginalisation of cannabis users

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| 1. What evidence is there of other forms of marginalisation caused by use of cannabis – exclusion from school, losing jobs, stigma etc.?
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| 1. How many people are affected by this and in what way are they affected?
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### Part 1E: Synthetic cannabinoids

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| 1. What effect have synthetic cannabinoids had on the use of cannabis in the UK and mental health in general and what effects has it had on the groups in which it is used most commonly?
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### Part 1F: Pathways in and out of cannabis

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| 1. What evidence is there for why people start to use cannabis for recreational use, where this leads them and why they continue or stop? |
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### Part 1G: Services:

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| 1. What evidence is there for changes in services in the past 10 years affecting the use of cannabis in the UK and the harms associated with it? *Please include details of all relevant services, including addiction, mental health, children’s and social services.*
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| 1. What evidence is there of outcomes of patients treated for cannabis-related disorder in mental health services?
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### Part 1H: Global Evidence of effects of different legal approaches

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| 1. What is the global evidence of the effects that different legal approaches to use, supply and production of cannabis have on use of cannabis (including prevalence of use, purity, components and strength) and the effects on mental illness and rates of mental illness? |
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### Part 1I: Reducing harm

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| 1. What evidence is there on the most effective methods of reducing the mental health harms associated with cannabis use and the specific effects of cannabinoids?
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| 1. What evidence is there on the ways in which people are educated on the effects of cannabis?
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### Part 1J: Research

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| 1. What do you think are the top two priorities for researchers looking into the relationship between cannabis and mental health?
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### Part 1K: Other comments

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| 1. Is there anything you would like to add to the above, or any other key areas the Review should be focussing on?
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## **Part 2: Medicinal Cannabis**

### Part 2A: Medicinal cannabis products for mental illnesses

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| 1. How strong is the evidence-base for cannabis-based medicinal products for use to treat mental illness? *When presenting your evidence, please clarify what mental disorder and what treatment you are referring to.*
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| 1. What action, if any, do you think should be taken by governing bodies and clinicians to reflect this evidence-base?
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### Part 2B: Guidance on medicinal cannabis

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| 1. What guidance is required for clinicians on how they should prescribe medicinal cannabis in the UK, especially in relation to possible adverse mental health effects and also other effects including impaired driving ability?
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### Part 2C: Research into medicinal cannabis

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| 1. What research is needed into the use of medicinal cannabis for treating mental illness?
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| 1. What barriers are in place preventing research into medicinal cannabis for use for mental illness?
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| 1. How can these barriers be overcome?
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### Part 2D: Link between medicinal cannabis and recreational use

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| 1. What evidence is there internationally of a link between the prescription of medicinal cannabis the prevalence of recreational use?
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### Part 2E: Pathways in and out of cannabis for medicinal use

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| 1. What evidence is there for people’s pathways into use of medicinal cannabis and their pathways to continued use and out of its use?
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### Part 2F: Other comments

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| 1. Is there anything you would like to add to the above, or any other key areas the Review should be focussing on?
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