

The landscape of medical cannabis in the UK is evolving, yet remains complex and often confusing — particularly when it comes to remote prescribing via video consultations. With digital healthcare growing, patients and clinicians alike are keen to understand how widespread remote prescribing is, how it's regulated, and what patients should realistically expect in terms of access and cost.

Legality vs Real-World Access: Medical Cannabis Prescribing in the UK

Since November 2018, medical cannabis products have been legal to prescribe in the UK under very specific circumstances. The Misuse of Drugs Regulations were amended to allow specialist doctors to prescribe cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPMs) where other treatment options have failed. However, legal permission does not equate to easy access.

Medical cannabis remains tightly controlled, and real-world access is constrained by several factors:

- Limited number of specialists willing or able to prescribe
- Hesitance from NHS clinicians due to limited evidence base and clinical guidelines
- Costs to patients when prescribed privately, often substantial due to lack of NHS funding
- Regional variations in service availability

Thus, while the legality is established, the practical reality is a narrow pathway to access — leading many patients to explore private clinics more willing to offer remote consultations and prescribing options.

Remote Prescribing and Video Consultations: Are They Common?

Remote prescribing refers to the process where a clinician issues a prescription following a consultation that is conducted virtually (video or telephone) rather than face-to-face. With the surge in telemedicine across healthcare sectors, medical cannabis clinics have adopted video consultations as a convenient route for patients.

In England, any service offering remote prescribing must notify the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**, the health and social care regulator. This adds a layer of oversight intended to protect patient safety, but it does not guarantee clinical practice quality or access.

How common is remote prescribing of medical cannabis specifically? The answer is nuanced:

- Many private clinics now offer video consultations as a way to reduce geographical barriers and increase patient convenience.
- Remote prescribing is officially permitted but must comply with strict regulatory requirements, including CQC notification.
- Some clinics prominently advertise “remote prescribing” but often omit crucial details on costs or subsequent prescription charges.

Based on available data and industry reports, remote prescribing for medical cannabis is increasingly common in the private market but remains relatively rare within NHS settings due to funding restrictions and clinical guidelines.

Why do patients favour remote consultations for medical cannabis?

- Access to specialists who are scarce locally

- Convenience of receiving care from home
- Discretion and privacy concerns

Who Can Prescribe Medical Cannabis Remotely in the UK?

Only doctors on the **General Medical Council (GMC) Specialist Register** can prescribe medical cannabis products. This specialization requirement is a safeguard against inappropriate prescribing and ensures clinicians have suitable expertise in the relevant conditions (e.g., neurology, pain management). General Practitioners (GPs) without such specialization cannot prescribe medical cannabis.

In the context of remote prescribing, the doctor conducting the consultation—whether face-to-face or via video—must be the responsible prescriber on the Specialist Register. This applies equally whether the consultation is in person or online.

It is important for patients to verify the prescribing doctor's credentials, as some clinics may imply broader prescribing rights that don't comply with regulation. Patients should ask to see evidence that the doctor is GMC-registered for the relevant specialty.

Regulation and Oversight: What Does CQC Notification Mean?

In England, the CQC regulates the safety and quality of health and social care services. Services providing remote prescribing must declare this activity by notifying the CQC. This process is designed to:

- Ensure service providers meet standards for safety, effectiveness, and patient care, even in virtual settings
- Provide transparency about who is offering remote prescriptions
- Allow the CQC to monitor trends and intervene if poor practice is identified

However, *notification* is different from *registration*. While clinics must notify the CQC about remote prescribing services, this does not always mean the service has been inspected or fully approved for every aspect of care they provide. Patients should look for evidence of registration or clear inspection reports to feel assured about service quality.



The NHS Funding Gap and the Private Market Reality

One of the biggest barriers to routine prescribing of medical cannabis on the NHS is funding. At present, NHS England recommends medical cannabis prescriptions only in highly exceptional cases because of limited robust clinical evidence and cost-effectiveness concerns.

Consequently, most medical cannabis prescribing occurs in the private sector, where patients pay out-of-pocket. This creates a significant funding gap:



<https://todaynews.co.uk/2026/08/10/inside-the-uks-private-medical-cannabis-clinics-how-the-sector-actually-works/>

- **NHS:** Rarely prescribes medical cannabis. Patients face waiting lists and limited options.
- **Private clinics:** Offer quicker access, often via remote consultation, but at considerable cost.

Important: Many private clinics fail to clearly state consultation fees or prescription prices upfront. This lack of transparency can leave patients unclear about the total financial commitment required, including:

- Initial consultation fee for video appointment
- Follow-up appointment charges (often necessary for prescription renewal and monitoring)
- Cost of medical cannabis products themselves (which can be high and variable)
- Delivery or pharmacy dispensing fees

Patients should ask clinics directly for a full breakdown of all costs, including follow-up consultations and ongoing prescription expenses, before committing.

Checklist for Patients Considering Remote Prescribing of Medical Cannabis

Consideration What to Check Prescriber Credentials Is the doctor GMC-registered on the Specialist Register? Which specialty? Service Regulation Has the provider notified the CQC about remote prescribing in England? Consultation Model Is the consultation by video or phone? How long is the appointment? Pricing Transparency Are consultation fees and prescription costs clearly stated upfront? What about follow-ups? Prescription Supply

How is the medicine dispensed and delivered? What's the cost and turnaround time? Clinical Support Is there ongoing support and monitoring after the prescription?

Summary: Remote Prescribing for Medical Cannabis Is Increasing But Not Yet Routine

Remote prescribing via video consultations for medical cannabis is growing in the UK private healthcare market and is permissible under law with proper regulatory notification. However, it is far from common in the NHS due to restrictions on funding and guidelines.

Patients seeking medical cannabis prescriptions remotely must ensure their provider:

- Employs doctors on the GMC Specialist Register
- Is compliant with CQC notification if in England
- Discloses full costs for consultations, prescriptions, and follow-ups
- Provides clear clinical guidance and ongoing care options

Above all, separating legal permissibility from practical availability helps patients avoid unrealistic expectations and ensures informed decision-making on their care journey.

If you are considering medical cannabis treatment remotely, use this blog post as a starting point to ask the right questions and choose a safe, transparent service backed by regulatory oversight.