

What is a Cancard in the UK? A Comprehensive Guide

A Cancard indicates to police that you use cannabis to help manage the symptoms of a health condition. It was created by medical cannabis patient Carly Barton and its goal is to encourage police and legal authorities to treat individuals medicating with cannabis as patients rather than criminals.

In the post, we'll provide you with a comprehensive guide to the Cancard, including a list of its benefits and the eligibility criteria for getting one.

What is a Cancard?

A Cancard is a medical ID card demonstrating that you use cannabis for medicinal purposes and not recreationally. By carrying a Cancard you may receive protection against arrest or any legal ramifications if you are caught with cannabis. However, it's not a "get out of jail free" card and does not guarantee you immunity from arrest.

A brief history of Cancard

The card was introduced in 2020 by Carly Barton who herself uses cannabis to manage her Fibromyalgia and post-stroke Neuropathy. Her goal was to make it easier for individuals to access the drug for medical purposes and reduce the amount of police time wasted from pursuing vulnerable people reliant on it to treat their various medical conditions.

A cannabis prescription and cannabis-based medication is the only way to be certain you won't face legal trouble when in possession of cannabis. However, this is usually only obtained through private clinics and doctors, which is not an affordable option for many. The Cancard aims to help people who cannot access medical cannabis — and instead source it illegally — to manage their health problems without living in fear of arrest.

What are the benefits of Cancard

The benefits of having a Cancard include having a medical ID card that can demonstrate that you have a medical need for cannabis. It can also help people feel more comfortable consuming cannabis as it legitimises their need for the drug.

Who's eligible for a Cancard?

You are eligible for a medical cannabis card if you have received a medical cannabis prescription, have been referred to a specialist in order to receive one or have a medical condition that is treated with medical cannabis. These include:

- Chronic pain from conditions such as arthritis, migraines or fibromyalgia
- Cancer symptoms and side effects from treatment, including anxiety, depression, loss of appetite and nausea from chemotherapy
- Gastrointestinal issues, like IBS and Crohn's disease
- Neurological conditions such as Parkinson's and epilepsy
- Mental health problems like OCD, PTSD, anxiety and depression

How to apply for a CanCard

In order to receive a Cancard, you must be over 18 years of age and have a condition that would allow you to receive a private medical cannabis prescription (see the above list of conditions).

Next, you need to apply for a Cancard via the [Cancard website](#). To do this you'll need a phone number, a photographic form of ID, like a passport or driving licence, your NHS number, your GP's details and your Summary Care Record (an electronic record of important patient information you can get from your GP). Your application will then be reviewed. If you are approved you will receive your card within 2-3 weeks.

Even if you have a private prescription for medical cannabis, you may still want to apply for a Cancard in order to have a clear and easy way to show police that you are using the drug for medicinal purposes. You may also find carrying the card legitimises your need for cannabis and can help reduce the stigma you may face for using it.

Cancard membership is £29 per year. If you are unable to afford this, you can contact Cancard directly to discuss potential subsidisation.

Uses of CanCard

It's recommended that you carry your Cancard on your person if you are taking your cannabis supply or equipment around with you. Having a Cancard in your possession can significantly help your case if you are caught with cannabis and you can quickly and easily present it as a means to demonstrate your medical status. It proves that you are legally entitled to a cannabis prescription but are only without one due to affordability issues.

If you find yourself in trouble with the police or the law, the Cancard comes with various resources you can use to help you, including:

- A guide to stop and search
- Details of a helpline you can contact for legal advice
- An outline of a legal framework you can use for your defence
- A self reporting tool that you can use for a legal review

You may also wish to use your Cancard to show to friends, family and others to show that you have a legitimate medical need for the drug and to bring down the stigma attached to it.

CanCard and Accessibility

It is very difficult to get an NHS prescription for medical cannabis as you are required to meet very strict criteria in order to qualify. At the time of writing, NHS doctors are only permitted to prescribe medical cannabis for epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and nausea caused by chemotherapy. There are also discussions about introducing it as a treatment for chronic pain.

In the private sector, it is far easier to get a prescription. This means that only those with the means to go private for their medical needs are able to afford the costs of consultations and purchasing their prescriptions. As a result, many vulnerable people who need cannabis to manage their condition are forced to procure it through illegal means, even though they have a legitimate medical need for it.

Cancard's main initiative is to prevent such people from finding themselves in legal troubles due to simply being unable to afford a private prescription for a drug they need. As founder Carly Barton puts it: "I hope that the card will get us to a point where patients are no longer living in fear and whereby, we address some of the institutional and societal stigma around consuming cannabis sensibly and safely and in a medicinal context."

Canard is therefore promoting accessibility by giving patients security in using illegally procured cannabis when they cannot afford a prescription. As a result, the scheme is working towards creating a more inclusive society.

On the [Cancard website](#) you can find testimonials from Cancard members who are hugely grateful to the scheme for helping them feel more confident treating their condition with cannabis. This includes accounts from people with arthritis who say the card helps them no longer having to constantly look over their shoulder when using cannabis and a PTSD sufferer who says not having to worry about arrest would help his condition.

Conclusion

A Cancard can help offer you protection from legal ramifications if you're caught with cannabis. It proves that you have a legitimate medical need for cannabis and are simply using it for recreational purposes. Instead, you are only in violation of the Drugs Act because you are unable to afford a private prescription. The Cancard scheme is therefore contributing to building a fairer society when it comes to providing medical cannabis to those who need it.