

Procedure for Prescribing Medicinal Cannabis



Purpose of this procedure:

The aim of this procedure is to outline the process in NHS Lothian for handling requests for approval for prescription of medical cannabis.

The key **objectives** of this procedure are:

- to ensure a consistent approach across Lothian
- to ensure individual patient need is met

The Procedure:

Background

On November 1st 2018, the UK Government laid regulations which moved cannabis-based products for medicinal use out of Schedule 1 and into Schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (MDR), with the exception of synthetic cannabinoids i.e. synthetic versions of naturally occurring cannabinoids (e.g. Marinol/Dronabinol) or any non-natural cannabinoids obtained by chemical synthesis (nabilone).

Sativex® - (cannabis extracts containing THC and CBD) is the only cannabis based medicinal product that is licensed for use in the UK. It is licensed as a treatment for spasticity in multiple sclerosis. The manufacturer has not yet made a submission to the Scottish Medicines Consortium and so it is not routinely available in Scotland.

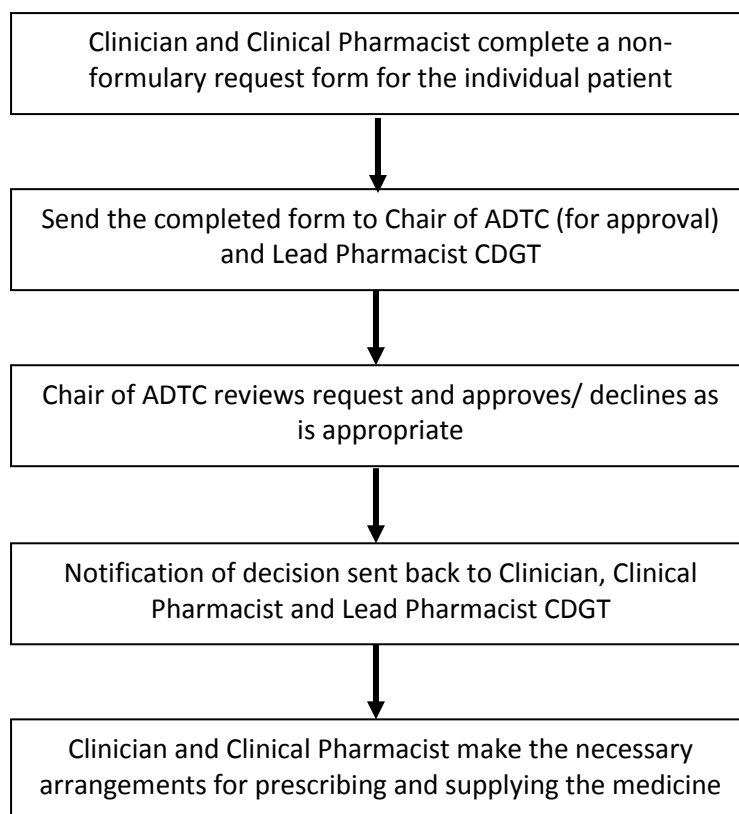
To date, the MHRA has licensed **no** other cannabis-based medicinal products as medicines. This procedure relates to products considered for medicinal use. All cannabis-based products for medicinal use apart from Sativex® would be **unlicensed medicines**. The current position is that no cannabis-based products for medicinal use are routinely available in the NHS in Scotland. As with any unlicensed medicines or "specials", the approval for prescribing of such products must be on an individual patient basis.

The NHS Lothian Policy and Procedures for the Use of Unlicensed Medicines should be followed. This includes the completion of a Non-formulary request form for each patient.

Cannabis-based products for medicinal use should only be prescribed for indications where there is clear published evidence of benefit or UK Guidelines and in patients where there is a clinical need which cannot be met by a licensed medicine and where established treatment options have been exhausted. This means that cannabis based products should only be prescribed where there are no other alternative treatments. **The only two indications for use based on the current evidence based advice are; paediatric patients with certain forms of severe epilepsy and patients with chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting unresponsive to standard antiemetics.** Any clinician prescribing for these indications would need to ensure that they felt competent to prescribe cannabis based products.

NHSScotland guidance noted that as a minimum, it is expected that approval for use is granted on an individual patient basis by the Board Medical Director or the Chair of ADTC.

Process Flowchart



Associated materials/references:

1. NHS Lothian Policy and Procedure for Use of Unlicensed Medicines
2. Procedure for prescribing Non-Formulary Medicines