

As private medical cannabis clinics become more common todaynews.co.uk in the UK, patients are rightly cautious about transparency, safety, and legality. If you're considering treatment through a private cannabis clinic, one of the key questions you need answered is: **Who is the prescribing doctor?**

This blog post will guide you on how to confirm the identity and credentials of the prescribing doctor at a private cannabis clinic. We'll cover important themes such as legality versus real-world access, the NHS funding gap and private market reality, doctor's specialties, regulatory oversight by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England, and common pitfalls such as hidden consultation and prescription costs.

Legality vs Real-World Access: What You Need to Know

Medical cannabis has been legal for prescription in the UK since November 2018. However, very few NHS prescriptions have been issued, primarily due to strict clinical guidelines and limited specialist access.¹ This gap means many patients explore private clinics. But legality does not guarantee easy or transparent access to treatment.

Private clinics operate in a competitive, often confusing marketplace with a mix of legitimate and questionable providers. While it is legal to have private medical cannabis prescriptions, patients must verify that the prescribing doctor is fully qualified and registered to prescribe in line with professional and regulatory requirements.

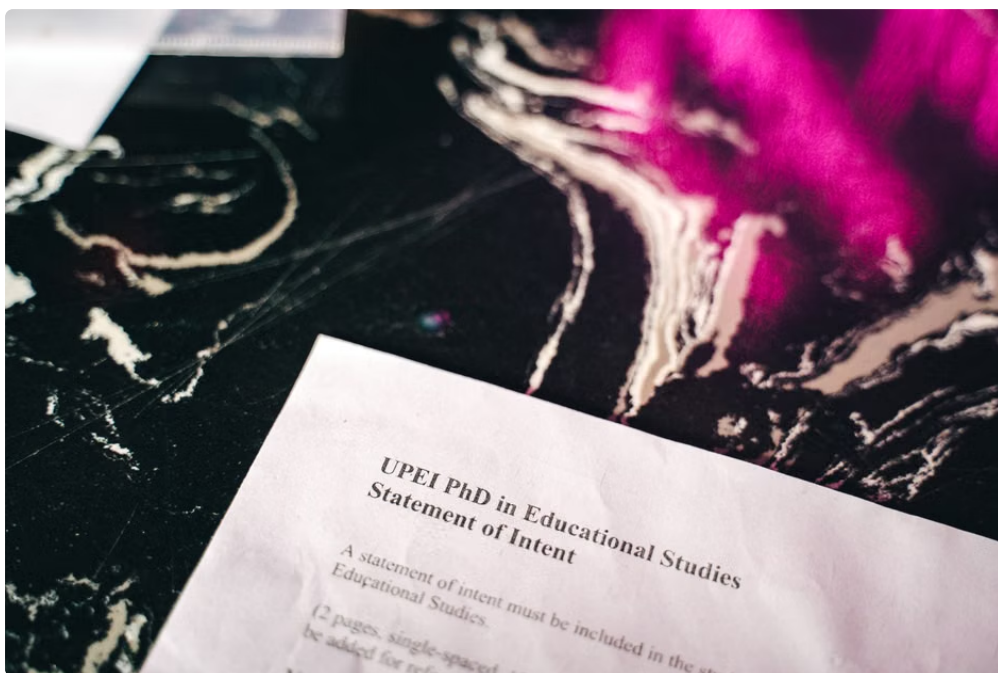
The NHS Funding Gap and the Private Market Reality

The scarcity of NHS-funded medical cannabis prescriptions creates a real-world access issue. Patients who do not meet NHS criteria or who cannot wait often turn to private clinics. These clinics usually charge consultation fees ranging from £150–£350 per appointment and may charge separately for prescriptions and follow-up appointments.²

This structure sometimes leads to a lack of transparency. Some private clinics do not clearly state fees upfront or whether these costs include consultations, video calls, prescriptions, and follow-ups. Patients must ensure they understand the full cost before proceeding.

Who Can Prescribe Medical Cannabis in the UK?

Medical cannabis can only be prescribed by a **doctor on the General Medical Council (GMC) Specialist Register** in the UK or by a doctor with "appropriate training and expertise" in the specific clinical area.³



This means that your prescribing doctor should be:

- **Registered with the GMC** and licensed to practise medicine in the UK
- **Listed on the GMC Specialist Register** appropriate to the medical condition for which the cannabis is prescribed (e.g., neurology, pain management, palliative care)
- **Following NICE guidelines and evidence-based clinical practice** when recommending treatment

Doctors without specialist registration can prescribe but must have appropriate training and experience, and this is often scrutinised more closely by regulators.

Why the Specialist Register Matters

The Specialist Register verifies that a UK doctor has undergone formal postgraduate training and holds qualifications recognised as appropriate to their specialty. This provides patients with reassurance about medical expertise and accountability.

You can check any UK doctor's details, including their specialty and licence status, on the GMC Medical Register online. This is an essential step in confirming your clinic's prescribing doctor is legitimate.

How Is Prescribing Regulated in Private Cannabis Clinics?

Regulation of private healthcare clinics varies between UK nations. In England, private clinics must register with and are inspected by the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**. The CQC mandates that activities such as **remote consultations and remote prescribing** are declared and meet set safety standards.⁴

Video Consultations and Remote Prescribing

Many private cannabis clinics offer video consultations to increase access and convenience. However, in England:

- Remote prescribing must be declared to the CQC as part of the clinic's registration and included in risk assessments.
- Clinics should clearly inform patients if consultations and prescribing are conducted remotely.
- There must be systems in place to verify patient identity, consent, and to maintain medical records securely.

These requirements ensure that remote prescribing does not compromise patient safety. If a clinic does not mention its CQC status or remote prescribing policies clearly, this is a red flag.

Regulation Outside England

In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, private clinics are regulated differently. Some jurisdictions do not have formal inspection regimes analogous to the CQC for private healthcare providers. Patients should check with local health authorities for specific oversight mechanisms.

Steps to Confirm the Prescribing Doctor at a Private Cannabis Clinic

Ensuring transparency about the prescribing doctor is essential before consenting to treatment. Here is a checklist you can follow:

1. **Request the Prescribing Doctor's Full Name and GMC Number** Always ask the clinic for the prescribing doctor's official details — full name, GMC registration number, specialty.
2. **Verify GMC Registration and Specialty** Use the GMC Medical Register to check that the doctor is on the Specialist Register in the relevant area. This is your proof the doctor is qualified to prescribe *medical cannabis* for your condition.
3. **Check the Clinic's CQC Registration and Compliance** If in England, find the clinic on the CQC's website to confirm they are registered and have declared remote prescribing, if applicable.
4. **Ask About Consultation and Prescription Fees Upfront** Insist the clinic provides clear pricing details: consultation costs, prescription costs, and follow-up appointments. Avoid clinics that list prices vaguely or bundle everything with "call for info" disclaimers.
5. **Confirm Whether Consultations Are In-Person or Remote** Ask if your appointment will be face-to-face or video-based. Remote consultations carry additional verification steps, but are commonplace.
6. **Request Details About the Follow-Up Process** Medical cannabis treatment requires ongoing monitoring. The clinic should explain clearly how follow-up appointments and prescription renewals are handled, and at what cost.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

1. Clinics Not Stating Full Pricing Transparently

One frequent problem is that many private cannabis clinics advertise consultation prices but fail to disclose prescription or follow-up fees clearly. This leads to surprise costs and pressure to commit before you fully understand the financial commitment.

Tip: Always get a full written pricing breakdown before booking your appointment. If this is not forthcoming, consider it a warning sign.

2. Blurring Healthcare with Wellness Marketing

Some clinics use wellness buzzwords or vague language to dodge clarity on medical qualifications and prescriptions. Statements like “cannabis consultants” rather than “doctor” or “specialist” can be misleading.

Tip: Check that the prescribing professional is a medically registered doctor, not a wellness coach or non-medical advisor.

3. Assuming Legality Means Availability

While medical cannabis is legally prescribable, NHS funding limits mean that access is tightly controlled. Private clinics fill this gap but can vary widely in quality.

Tip: Confirm your doctor’s specialist status and the clinic’s regulatory standing rather than assuming that legality equals straightforward availability or quality care.

Summary: Your Checklist for Confirming the Prescribing Doctor

Step	Action	Why It Matters
1	Obtain full prescribing doctor’s name and GMC number	Verification of medical licence and identity
2	Check GMC Specialist Register status online	Confirm relevant specialty and competence
3	Find clinic’s CQC registration if in England	Assurance of regulatory compliance
4	Request clear, complete pricing details	Avoid hidden fees and unexpected costs
5	Clarify consultation modality – video or in-person	Understand how prescribing and advice are delivered
6	Ask about follow-up appointment and prescription renewal policies	Ensure safe, ongoing care

Final Thoughts

Choosing a private cannabis clinic requires diligence and research. While the legal framework allows for private medical cannabis prescribing, confirming *who* the prescribing doctor is and verifying their credentials, speciality, and regulatory compliance are critical steps you should never skip.

Transparency about consultation and prescription costs, understanding the clinic’s operational model (remote or in-person), and awareness of the gaps in NHS access will empower you to make safer, more informed choices.

Remember: legality does not equal easy access, and non-transparent marketing should always raise caution.

1 NHS England guidelines and prescribing data, 2023. 2 Private cannabis clinic pricing examples, UK, 2024. 3 General Medical Council (GMC) guidance on medical cannabis prescribing. 4 Care Quality Commission regulations on remote prescribing in private clinics.