

CANNABIS SOCIAL EQUITY PRINCIPLES

14 PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE A JUST, FAIR, AND EQUITABLE CANNABIS MARKET IN THE UK



1. **Decriminalisation** should go hand in hand with regulation. There should be no criminal or civil sanctions for use or possession of cannabis (or for any personal use activity), regardless of whether cannabis comes from the licit or illicit economy. This should extend to *public* use of cannabis and supply without profit, that is, 'social supply'.
2. Use and/or possession of cannabis should no longer place people at risk of losing social and economic **rights**, such as housing or access to children - nor should it be a basis for prison recall or breach of probation.
3. Accumulated tax revenue should be **invested** in communities that have been over-policed and over-criminalised, and should support drug harm-reduction interventions and wider drug treatment initiatives.
4. **Automatic release** from prison should occur where the offence is cannabis-related only, as opposed to overturning judgements. Where cannabis offences are in coordination with other criminal offences, there should be a removal of the portion of any sentence added or directly attributed to a cannabis offence.
5. For those who have already been convicted of a cannabis offence, the government should adopt mass **automatic expungement** processes. That is, the complete destruction of prior cannabis-related convictions from government records in a streamlined process taking place without, or with the very minimum, participation of those convicted.
6. Whilst **awaiting** expungement processes, individuals with existing cannabis-related convictions should not be excluded from participation in any market or employment opportunity (within or outside of cannabis retail).
7. In developing a regulatory framework, ethnic minority communities and those with lived experience of drug law enforcement must be properly **involved** and **consulted** as those most impacted by cannabis prohibition. The legal cannabis retail market must adopt an anti-racist framework of policies and practices based on equity creation and must take steps to ensure diversity and inclusion among its actors.
8. Schemes should be in place to actively **support** people who have been criminalised for cannabis-related activities, and people from communities that have been over-policed and over-criminalised as a result of cannabis-focused law enforcement, *into* the legal industry. A minimum percentage of **licences** should be allocated to people from these communities, and should be accompanied by licence-application support.
9. Financial and technical expertise, access to grants and loans, and access to land, must be **robust** and made available immediately after new legislation comes into effect in order to minimise the transition period from an illicit to a licit market. Access to this support must be subject to **transparency** and ethnic minority and socio-economically disadvantaged groups should be connected to expert networks.
10. It is imperative that small-scale cultivators and those from lower socio-economic groups, whose main source of income has been the illicit cannabis trade, are **transitioned** into the legal market, if that is what they want, to ensure that economic harm is not perpetuated through reform.
11. **Cooperative** forms of distribution, namely, cannabis 'social club' models - which currently operate illicitly within the UK - should be incorporated into any new regulatory system, and consulted on how inclusion should be best executed.
12. Any new regulatory system should allow for non-commercial **domestic cultivation**. Policy should include individuals' right to grow cannabis at home for personal use, and gifting (without monetary reward), for example, in the same way that individuals are able to brew their own beer.
13. There should be **no specific (additional) criminalisation** of activity outside of the regulated market. Those involved in *illicit* market supply - who have either not been able to, or do not want to, operate in the licit market - should be treated in the same way as in other similar (alcohol/tobacco) markets. Selling alcohol without a licence, for example, is a summary offence in the UK. For those operating within the *licit* market, there should be no specific criminalisation, for example, if there is a failure to pay taxes, this should be dealt with through existing tax evasion legislation or if the end product is harmful, this should be dealt with through existing product liability laws.
14. A dedicated and diverse **board**, inclusive of those who have been subject to over-policing, should be established to ensure oversight and central monitoring. The board's role will be to promote equity and ensure that the legal industry is inclusive and economically empowering for those who have been disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition. Data should be collected and routinely published.

Read the full report here:

www.release.org.uk/publications/cannabis-regulating-right

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