

Cannabis-Based Products for Medicinal Use (CBPMs) Dispensing Audit

Background

In late summer / early autumn 2023, the Government of Jersey (GoJ) undertook an audit of Cannabis-Based Products for Medicinal Use (CBPMs) dispensing. CBPMs are commonly called medicinal cannabis, which is the term used in this paper.

Medicinal cannabis is an unlicensed medicine which may be legally prescribed to patients in Jersey. It can be prescribed by doctors or other prescribing professionals, such as prescribing nurses, although in practice it is currently only prescribed by doctors.

Medicinal cannabis is a controlled drug. This means that it is subject to high levels of regulation or control because of decisions taken about the addictive or potentially harmful nature of the drug.

In Jersey, these controls include requiring any pharmacist who dispenses medicinal cannabis to provide a monthly return to the Chief Pharmacist setting out the amount and type of medicinal cannabis dispensed to patients and the name of the doctor who prescribed the medicinal cannabis.

The Chief Pharmacist works for the Health and Community Service Department.

This audit was undertaken by examining the monthly returns provided by pharmacists to the Chief Pharmacist in 2022 and the first six months of 2023.

Audit

The audit was undertaken to:

- understand the number of medicinal cannabis prescriptions dispensed in Jersey
- understand the number of individual patients in receipt of a medicinal cannabis,
- compare Jersey data with equivalent data in England,
- quantify the numbers of prescriptions dispensed per prescriber.

This audit only includes information about private prescriptions of unlicensed medicinal cannabis. An unlicensed medicine is one which is not officially licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for the treatment of a particular health condition.¹

The audit does not include data about prescriptions for licensed medicinal cannabis products, such as those prescribed by hospital consultants to treat the symptoms of multiple sclerosis.

Audit findings: number of prescriptions and patients

¹ [Unlicensed and "Off-label" Medicines \(ouh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.ouh.nhs.uk)

2022 (12 months from January to December)

- total medical cannabis prescriptions dispensed in Jersey = 23,639²
- total estimated patients in Jersey = 4,361

Jersey / England³ comparison 2022 (9 months from January to September)

	England	Jersey
Population	56,490,048	103,267
No. of prescriptions dispensed (Jan-Sept 2022 as England available data)	79,579	18,990
Number of unique patients	~20,000	4,139
% of population receiving prescriptions	0.04%	4.01%
Working Age Population (16-64)	37,605,650	68,055
% of working age population receiving prescriptions	0.05%	6.08%

2023 (six months from January to June only)

- total medical cannabis prescriptions dispensed in Jersey = 16,714⁴
- total estimated patients in Jersey = 2,880

Jersey / England⁵ comparison 2023: no available England data at time of audit

Audit findings: activity by prescriber

²In 2022 there were 529 personal important licences² for medicinal cannabis (ie. people imported medicinal cannabis into Jersey rather than buying it locally). These imports are not included because the audit focuses on local dispensing activity however, it is the case that the total numbers of prescriptions in 2022 was 23,639 + 529.

³ [National trends in the prescribing of controlled drugs - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk):Page 22 of full report.

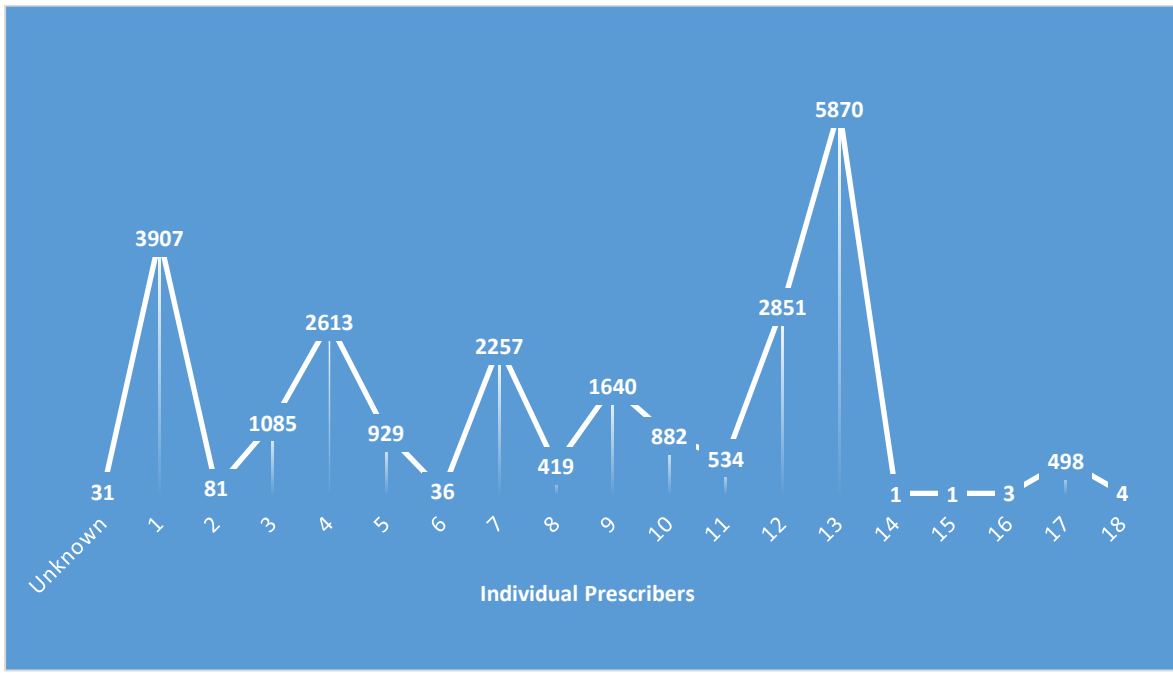
⁴ From January to June 2023 there were 201 personal important licences⁴ for medicinal cannabis. If these were to be included in the audit the total numbers of prescriptions for the first six months of 2023 would be 16,714 + 201.

⁵ [National trends in the prescribing of controlled drugs - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk):Page 22 of full report.

2022

Total number of prescribers = 18

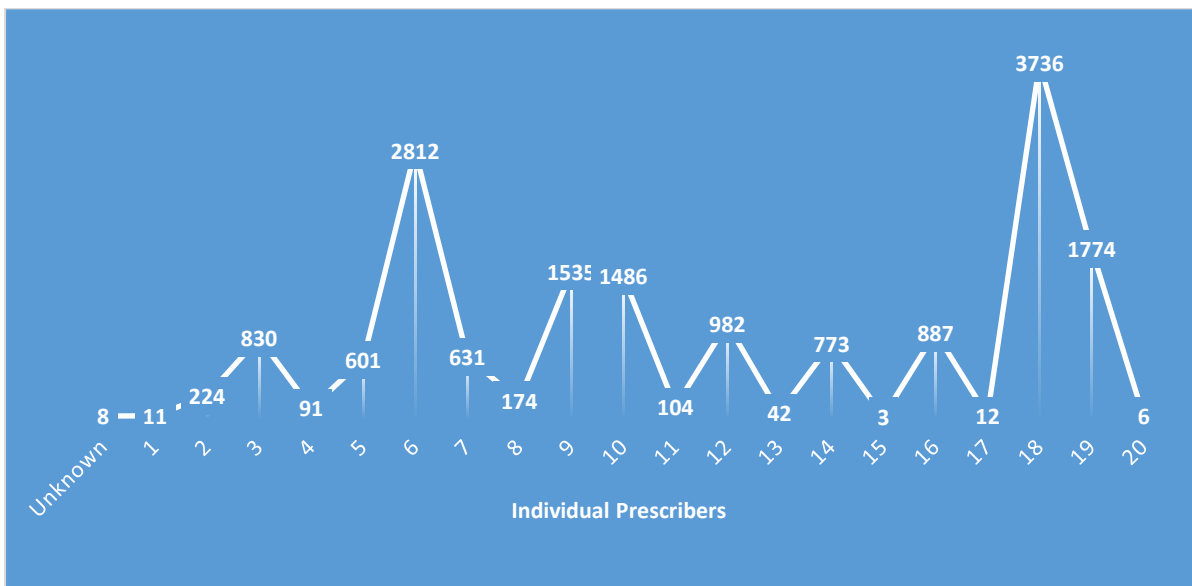
Number of prescriptions issued by prescriber⁶:



2023

Total number of prescribers = 20

Number of prescriptions issued by prescriber:



⁶ Each prescriber has been issued an identifying number.

Findings

1. Volume of dispensing is notably higher in Jersey than the UK by percentage of population.
2. In one month (January 2023) 30 individual patients received prescriptions from two or more prescribers in Jersey. Some patients received multiple prescriptions from the same clinic, some received prescriptions from different clinics.
3. Multiple prescriptions were for amounts that would reasonably be assumed to be more than 1 months' supply of medicinal cannabis. NICE guidance advises no more than a 30-days' supply⁷. NHS guidance also advises 30 days' supply⁸

⁷ ([Recommendations | Controlled drugs: safe use and management | Guidance | NICE](#), 1.5.5: "Prescribe enough of a controlled drug to meet the person's clinical needs for no more than 30 days."

⁸ ([NHS Prescriptions Factsheet \(V2\) \(nhsbsa.nhs.uk\)](#)), p.1: "It is strongly recommended that a prescriber writes a prescription which does not exceed a maximum quantity of 30 days' supply of Schedule 2, 3 and 4 controlled drugs."