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Call for Government to turbocharge UK cannabinoid innovation, as Minister addresses industry leaders

A groundbreaking new report published today sets out 20 key recommendations which, upon implementation, would set the UK on a path to become the global leader in cannabinoid innovation.

From Containment to Nurturing: How the UK can become a world leader in cannabinoid innovation was commissioned by The Centre for Medicinal Cannabis and the Association for the Cannabinoid Industry. It is authored by renowned regulatory thinker Professor Christopher Hodges and will be launched with a speech by George Freeman MP, Minister for Science, Research & Innovation – the first ever ministerial address to the legal cannabis sector. It draws on wide ranging inputs from leading industry players, academics, patients, consumers and investors.

Hodges argues that the regulatory framework he sets out would achieve three important objectives:

- Global competitive advantage for the UK post-Brexit, helping the country to leverage its historic and economic strengths in a rapidly growing and unprecedented global industry;
- Regulatory best practice giving early mover advantage, helping to pioneer new approaches to regulating a novel industry that other jurisdictions on a similar path can choose to emulate;
- Scientific advances and innovations, with pioneering new treatments, manufacturing methods, and end user product innovations, helping the UK to reinforce its reputation as the home of world-leading inventions and discoveries that improve our environment, our health, and quality of life

The report views the cannabinoid sector through the lens of *Outcome-Based Cooperative Regulation*, a regulatory philosophy pioneered by Hodges. He argues that for regulations to be effective, they need to be based in trust and collaboration.

Included in the recommendations are calls for GPs to be allowed to prescribe medicinal cannabis, updates to hemp farming rules, modernisation of the Proceeds of Crime Act and the creation of a national patient registry for all cannabis based medicines prescribed in the UK.

The report urges the Government to establish a ‘stewarding’ authority to govern and guide the sector and implement the required reforms.

“The analysis in this report and the principles we have outlined lead us to recommend a series of policy changes to help bring about the positive and shared goals that we articulate. The recommendations are directed both at regulators and industry, with the understanding that both parties have an obligation to cooperate to steward this new industry and support it to develop in an innovative but also safe and responsible way.”

Professor Christopher Hodges, Emeritus Professor of Justice Systems at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Oxford

“It is no longer wise or sustainable for the government to continue to take a distanced, disinterested or laissez faire attitude to the sector as a whole, as it has done since the cannabis sector’s inception. The seeds are there for rapid growth but it cannot happen without a clear strategy built upon coordinated Government stewardship and the ambition to not just tolerate, but actively nurture the sector to expand and mature, so it attracts more investment, jobs and innovations, and secures political support and public recognition.”

THE HODGES REVIEW

A Review of UK Public Policy & Regulatory Stewardship of the Legal Cannabis Industry

Dr Parveen Bhatarah, Chief Scientific Officer, Centre for Medicinal Cannabis/Association for the Cannabinoid Industry

“Our conclusion from this research is not that the UK’s legal cannabis sector is over-regulated, or merely suffering from outdated rules, or simply needs red tape and unwarranted regulations to be stripped back. The regulations encompassing the cannabis sector are wide-ranging and complicated, but right now are also uncalibrated to the risks associated with each product.”

Blair Gibbs, Senior Associate, Centre for Medicinal Cannabis/Association for the Cannabinoid Industry

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About ACI

The Association for the Cannabinoid Industry (ACI) is the UK’s membership organisation for businesses committed to nurturing a safe, legal and flourishing commercial cannabis extract market. ACI’s vision is to create an innovative and ethical sector with the highest standards of product quality, consumer satisfaction and regulatory compliance.
<https://theaci.co.uk>

About CMC

The Centre for Medicinal Cannabis (CMC) is a membership association for organisations operating at the forefront of the UK medicinal cannabinoid industry. CMC argues for policy changes to promote better understanding of the benefits of medicinal cannabis, increased access to medicines for patients and a more regulatory requirement more conducive to institutional investment in the sector.
<https://thecmcuk.org>

About Professor Christopher Hodges

Christopher Hodges is Emeritus Professor of Justice Systems, Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford. He is a Supernumerary Fellow of Wolfson College Oxford. He has a special interest in health systems and was Chairman of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (representing NHS community pharmacists 2007-11). He was Vice-Chair of the Association of British Healthcare Industries (2004-8), and Chair of EUCOMED’s Legal Affairs Committee (1995-2008).

Useful links

Hodges Review - <https://hodgesreview.com>
Centre for Medicinal Cannabis - <https://thecmcuk.org>
The Association for the Cannabinoid Industry - <https://theaci.co.uk>
First November Group - <https://firstnovember.com>