



## **Aim**

To fight a high intensity media, lobbying and digital campaign to pressure the UK government into the legalisation of cannabis for medicinal purposes within an 18 month timescale. Specifically to change legislation such that GPs are able to prescribe cannabis to patients that they believe it would be helpful to, and importantly for those prescriptions to be honoured at pharmacies.

## **Background**

There have been significant moves across the world in recent years both to allow the use of cannabis for medical purposes and, in some jurisdictions, to establish legal regulated markets for recreational use. In the UK, cannabis is still listed as a Schedule 1 substance, which means it is not thought to have any therapeutic value, and therefore cannot be lawfully possessed or prescribed. With the exception of one cannabis-based product (Sativex) which can be prescribed for a very limited number of conditions, patients who cultivate and use cannabis as a medicine in the UK do so illegally, putting themselves at risk of criminal prosecution, as do hundreds of thousands of people who use cannabis recreationally.

There are a number of organisations with varying structures, operating methods, aims and aspirations playing a role in this debate. Some focus on activism, some on lobbying and others on the production of scientific research to inform the debate. Some groups are intent on full legalisation of cannabis and other drugs. Others have more limited aims. While there is a good level of cooperation within the sector, the UK has yet to see a concerted, coordinated national campaign with clear goals and a well-financed campaign apparatus behind it. The recent creation of an umbrella group, the National Cannabis Coalition (headed by ex-chief constable Tom Lloyd) offers the prospect of running more focused and effective campaigns in the future.

From our initial discussions in this complex area, we believe there is scope to fight a high intensity campaign focused on one aspect of this issue, namely the legalisation of cannabis for medical use. We sense that this is an issue which would command very widespread support amongst the public and in the political world. The problems suffered by those diagnosed with some of the debilitating conditions that could be eased by the medical use of cannabis will have a strong emotional resonance with people even if they themselves are not directly affected. Politicians will find it difficult to resist the call for action when confronted by the suffering being endured, particularly when this is featured in the media and the wider campaign.

Therefore, we believe that concentrating solely on the lawful use of cannabis for medical conditions in this campaign is the correct strategic decision at this time.

## **What would the campaign look like?**

The campaign will need a high quality digital presence. We will need to gather a very large number of online supporters in a short timescale. We will need to hit 100,000 to have any credibility with

the media and to generate any sense of political momentum. The 100,000 figure is a minimum. Five times that should be a realistic target. And these 'sign ups' will need to be engaged with. We will be asking them to do a range of things at the appropriate time. These will include, but not be limited to – contacting their MPs, contacting local and regional media, and spreading the message via their social networks.

To do this properly, we will need to secure the use of a full campaigning/contact system along the lines of Blue State Digital. There are numerous important issues surrounding the mass emailing of supporters on the scale we envisage, particularly when you are asking them to take action. Doing this without a supporting IT system would be almost undoable. But even with such a system, we will need someone who has the technical knowledge to operate it effectively.

We will also need a number of spokesmen and women. Our first thoughts are that the most important of these will need to be carefully selected from those who are suffering the very medical conditions that cannabis can bring some relief to. In addition we will need credible voices from the law enforcement, legal and medical communities as and when required.

### **How will this need to operate?**

Campaigning by committee seldom works. The campaign would be badged as an initiative of the National Cannabis Coalition. Beneath that, we propose a very nimble structure involving Tom Lloyd as the director of the campaign, Tendo providing the strategic advice to direct the campaign, and Tim Colbourne providing strategic policy advice. That said, we would obviously draw on the expert knowledge of the many individuals and organisations active in this space. However, the main direction of the campaign would remain the responsibility of Tom, Tim and Tendo. We would work in a way that tried not to cut across or undermine any of the work being undertaken by the other groups. But there would be a need for the other groups to understand that this campaign must be allowed to remain focused on its core message and that the independence of the team guiding it must be maintained so they are free to be reactive and responsive.

The following example may help clarify this important area of how the campaign actually operates on a day to day basis. Imagine that we have decided to send a mass email to our growing database of supporters which, for the purposes of this example has risen to 150,000. Tendo will have provided the strategic advice about needing to send the email in the first place and its contents. Tendo, Tim and Tom will have worked together to refine the content of the email, and the technical team member (see below for how this position is costed) will have sent it via our campaigning software system. We will get many hundreds of replies to such a mass email. To be successful, we will have to engage with these replies even if only to acknowledge them. That can be quite a time consuming job. Tendo would not be able to fulfil that role. We would look to the technical person, perhaps backed up by some volunteer admin support and with guidance from Tom to fulfil this role.

### **Why has this got a good chance of working?**

If we can get many thousands of people interacting with their MPs, including some who need their cannabis for medical use, get the issue high up the media agenda and make use of every parliamentary device and procedure, then we have a strong chance of building up that whirlwind of activity that has a real chance of delivering the result.

The Tendo team have experience of winning with campaigns such as Joanna Lumley's Gurkha Justice Campaign and FairFuelUK. Peter founded and ran both of these campaigns amongst others. As well

as winning on the issue, these two campaigns won the ComRes 'Parliamentary Campaign of the Year' and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations 'Public Affairs Campaign of the Year' respectively. Additionally, Tendo have in depth knowledge of how government and parliament work having spent a combined total of 7 years at the very highest levels of the last government.

### **Likely costs**

Here is an outline of costs:

1. Monthly cost of licence for a fully integrated software system along the lines of Blue State Digital approx. £2,000 plus VAT.
2. Monthly cost of someone to operate the above system and all the associated social networks, as well as provide some limited administrative support – either as a staff member or more likely as a retained contractor – £2,500 per month.
3. Strategic campaign guidance from Tendo £7,000 per month plus VAT plus reasonable travel expenses.
4. Strategic policy advice from Tim £1,500 per month.

Monthly costs approx. £13,000 excluding VAT.

We envisage this being funded from a range of sources, including private individuals and grant-making bodies.

There would be an initial start-up cost in terms of the website of around £3,000 plus VAT for the website design and build.

During the campaign, there may be the need for other activities which may include:

1. The commissioning of reports or surveys.
2. Selective and strategic use of advertising on local radio etc.
3. Events in parliament – though the costs of these should be minimal.

The plan would be to raise funds for these additional campaign activities as and when required by calls for donations.