

Support

Understanding whether cannabis use is recreational or a dependency can help to identify whether help and support would be useful for you and your child(ren).

Parenting is challenging and cannabis use can bring extra pressures. You might want support if:

- You're feeling overwhelmed, anxious or unsure about how cannabis is affecting your parenting.
- You've noticed changes in your relationship with your child(ren).
- You're using cannabis to cope with stress, sleep, or mental health.
- You're worried about how your cannabis use might be perceived.
- You want to make informed choices and understand the risks, especially around child safety and wellbeing.

Legal Status

Cannabis is a Class B drug. Possession of cannabis is a criminal offence which a maximum sentence of 5 years and/or an unlimited fine.

County Durham Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services
Marijuana Anonymous UK
Talk to Frank Information about drugs
Waythrough

Cannabis and Parenting

As a parent or carer, your presence, awareness, and emotional connection are vital to your child's safety and development.

While cannabis is often seen as a way to relax or manage stress, its use can affect how you respond to your child's needs, make decisions in

emergencies, and maintain safe routines.

This leaflet explains why professionals may be concerned.



Impact on Parenting

- **Safety & Supervision:** Cannabis can cause drowsiness and slow reactions, making it harder to respond to emergencies or keep children safe.
- **Parenting Capacity:** Regular use may impair memory and focus, making it difficult to stay organised or notice a child's needs.
- **Behaviour & Attachment:** Cannabis can lead to unpredictable or withdrawn behaviour, affecting emotional connection and increasing the risk of neglect or abuse.
- **Pregnancy & Babies:** THC can pass to babies during pregnancy and breastfeeding, potentially harming brain and physical development.
- **Sleep Risks:** Cannabis use is linked to unsafe sleep practices. Co-sleeping after using cannabis increases the risk of Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy (SUDI).
- **Second-hand Exposure:** Cannabis smoke and fumes can affect children directly. Poor storage of cannabis products can lead to accidental ingestion.
- **Normalisation:** Children may see drug use as normal, increasing the likelihood of future experimentation.

Myths

“It’s natural, so it must be safe.”

While cannabis is plant-based, that doesn’t mean it’s harmless - especially for children exposed to second-hand smoke or impaired caregiving.

“It helps me relax, so I’m a better parent.”

While it may feel calming, cannabis can impair judgement, slow reaction times, and reduce emotional availability.

“It’s legal now, so it’s not a concern.”

Cannabis is a Class B drug and driving when high is illegal. If someone does not have a prescription for medical cannabis, then possession is a criminal offence, even if self-treating a health condition. Even when medicinal use is allowed, it must be prescribed by a specialist.

“I only use it when the kids are asleep - it doesn’t affect them.”

Cannabis can linger in your system and affect alertness and decision-making even hours later. Children may also be exposed to second-hand smoke or unsafe storage.

“Everyone does it, it’s not big deal.”

Normalising drug use can influence children’s attitudes and increase the likelihood of early experimentation. It also raises safeguarding concerns for professionals.