# London’s new cannabis policy cuts 30% of police stop-and-searches by banning smell searches



London’s cannabis landscape is undergoing significant transformation, heralded by a new policy framework that aims not only to reshape drug enforcement but also to address longstanding social inequalities. Recent shifts indicate a marked departure from punitive measures historically associated with drug laws, suggesting a future where policing strategies and economic opportunities may drastically change.

The London Drugs Commission, established by Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2022, embodies this progressive approach. Its comprehensive 42-point framework advocates for the decriminalisation of personal possession while maintaining stringent controls on commercial cannabis distribution. Currently, UK law categorises cannabis as a Class B substance, resulting in harsh penalties, including up to five years in prison for possession. The commission’s findings highlight alarming racial disparities within enforcement practices, revealing that Black and Asian communities are disproportionately affected despite similar usage rates across different demographics.

Economically, the implications of these changes are substantial. A 2016 parliamentary study estimated that full legalisation of cannabis could yield between £500 million and £1 billion annually in tax revenues. Additionally, it could lead to significant reductions in policing and court costs, allowing for reallocation of resources towards community development and social services.

A pivotal recommendation from the commission is the prohibition of police searches based on the smell of cannabis, a practice that has perpetuated systemic racial inequalities. This singular policy change is projected to reduce stop-and-search incidents by approximately 30%, aiming to dismantle the cycle of criminalisation that has primarily impacted young Black men. Evidence indicates that this disproportionate targeting results in criminal records, which severely limit employment and housing opportunities.

In contrast to full legalisation models, the new framework allows for limited home cultivation of cannabis, with stipulations ensuring that such practices do not undermine illegal markets. This cautious approach seeks to balance personal freedom with social responsibility, addressing concerns about unregulated production while providing a legitimate avenue for personal use.

International examples, such as Thailand’s rapid policy shifts regarding cannabis, serve as a cautionary tale. London’s incremental strategy, informed by careful monitoring and evaluation, aims to mitigate unexpected consequences by learning from both successful and problematic implementations abroad.

A novel aspect of the London Drugs Commission is its mandate for ongoing social equity assessments. These regular reviews are designed to ensure that policy changes deliver tangible benefits to communities historically marginalised by existing laws. The focus on transparency promises to foster accountability within enforcement practices, ensuring that benefits reach those who need them most rather than perpetuating existing inequalities.

These substantial policy shifts create potential for community investment and socio-economic growth. Savings from reduced criminal justice costs could be redirected into education programmes, mental health services, and job training initiatives in neighbourhoods that have long been over-policed. However, experts warn, challenges remain. The Centre for Social Justice has highlighted the dangers of increased mental health issues alongside a potential dual legal-illegal market, echoing problems observed in New York post-policy changes.

As the landscape evolves, personal financial strategies become crucial for individuals navigating these regulatory changes. Empowerment through economic awareness intersects with broader social reforms, equipping residents to leverage new opportunities responsibly.

Looking ahead, several essential steps for effective policy implementation are evident. First, targeted public education campaigns must address youth perceptions, particularly regarding the risks associated with cannabis use. Healthcare support services, funded by the NHS, need expansion to bolster vulnerable communities and counteract any negative effects of policy changes. Additionally, robust systems for long-term monitoring and independent health impact assessments are critical to evaluate mental health outcomes and ensure policy efficacy, continually adapting based on emerging evidence.

The cautious yet optimistic approach to cannabis reform in London marks a significant pivot from outright prohibition towards a nuanced, data-driven framework. Ultimately, the success of these initiatives hinges on sustained community engagement, comprehensive evaluation, and a readiness to adapt to the realities of changing social dynamics.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/12/sadiq-khan-launches-commission-to-examine-cannabis-legality)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[2]](https://www.london.gov.uk/london-drugs-commission-terms-reference), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-61416295)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/lord-charlie-falconer-qc-will-be-the-chair), [[6]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/london-drugs-commission-2)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[2]](https://www.london.gov.uk/london-drugs-commission-terms-reference)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/lord-charlie-falconer-qc-will-be-the-chair), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/12/sadiq-khan-launches-commission-to-examine-cannabis-legality)
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* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[2]](https://www.london.gov.uk/london-drugs-commission-terms-reference), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/12/sadiq-khan-launches-commission-to-examine-cannabis-legality)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-61416295)
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* Paragraph 10 – [[1]](https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/), [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/lord-charlie-falconer-qc-will-be-the-chair), [[6]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/london-drugs-commission-2)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.journee-mondiale.com/en/londons-new-cannabis-policy-eliminates-30-of-police-stops-with-one-rule-change/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.london.gov.uk/london-drugs-commission-terms-reference> - The London Drugs Commission, established by Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2022, aims to assess the effectiveness of current drug laws, particularly focusing on cannabis. The commission's purpose is to analyse alternative policy options and instigate a national debate on reducing drug-related harm in society. It will examine the impact of cannabis laws on crime, public health, and economic outcomes, considering enforcement practices and support services for addicts. The commission is set to report to the Mayor within 12 months with policy recommendations for various stakeholders, including City Hall, the Government, police, the criminal justice system, and public health services.
3. <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/lord-charlie-falconer-qc-will-be-the-chair> - Former Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Lord Charlie Falconer QC has been appointed as the chair of the first-ever London Drugs Commission. Announced by Mayor Sadiq Khan, the commission is tasked with examining the effectiveness of the UK's drug laws, with a particular focus on cannabis. The Mayor's office highlighted the importance of learning from international experiences, such as Los Angeles, where cannabis was legalised in 2016, to inform the UK's approach to drug policy.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/12/sadiq-khan-launches-commission-to-examine-cannabis-legality> - Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has announced the formation of a commission to examine the effectiveness of the UK's drug laws, focusing specifically on cannabis. The London Drugs Commission, chaired by Lord Charlie Falconer QC, aims to consider evidence from around the world on the outcomes of various drug policies. The commission will assess the impact of current cannabis laws on crime, public health, and economic outcomes, and will report to the Mayor with recommendations for policy changes.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-61416295> - A new group looking at whether to decriminalise cannabis in the UK has been set up by London mayor Sadiq Khan. Former justice secretary Lord Charlie Falconer QC will chair the first London Drugs Commission. The commission will consider the effectiveness of current drug laws, particularly focusing on cannabis, and will make recommendations to City Hall, the government, the police, the criminal justice system, and public health services.
6. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/london-drugs-commission-2> - Mayor Sadiq Khan has established the London Drugs Commission to examine the effectiveness of current drug laws, with a particular focus on cannabis. The commission will consider if there are ways to improve the current legal framework on the use of cannabis, as well as a criminal justice and public health response to drug use. The commission will report to the Mayor within 12 months with policy recommendations for various stakeholders, including City Hall, the Government, the police, the criminal justice system, and public health services.
7. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/drug-commission-plan> - The London Drugs Commission, established by Mayor Sadiq Khan, aims to examine the effectiveness of current drug laws, particularly focusing on cannabis. The commission will consider if there are ways to improve the current legal framework on the use of cannabis, as well as a criminal justice and public health response to drug use. The commission will report to the Mayor within 12 months with policy recommendations for various stakeholders, including City Hall, the Government, the police, the criminal justice system, and public health services.