

Cannabis supply and young people

'It's a social thing'

Martin Duffy, Nadine Schaefer, Ross Coomber, Lauren O'Connell and Paul J. Turnbull

How do young people obtain cannabis? A snapshot view from a large city and rural villages.

The supply of drugs to young people is an emotive subject with discussion rarely referring to actual evidence (which is itself scarce). What evidence exists shows that many young people gain access to drugs through older brothers and sisters, through friends and friends of friends, so-called 'social supply' networks.

This study interviewed 182 young people aged 11–19, all of whom had used cannabis and/or been involved in cannabis transactions in recent months. This group is unlikely to be representative of young people in general, so the report presents a snapshot view.

The study looks at:

- How and where young people got hold of cannabis;
- What involvement, if any, they had in supplying cannabis to others;
- How young people paid for cannabis;
- Responses from schools and police to cannabis use among young people;
- Implications for legislation and enforcement guidelines around cannabis use, in particular the issue of 'social supply'.



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Summary

The supply of drugs to young people is an emotive subject and discussion is rarely conducted with much reference to evidence. Research on young people's access to drugs is scarce in the UK. The evidence that exists, however, shows that many young people gain access to drugs through older brothers and sisters, through friends and friends of friends – so-called 'social supply' networks. This report offers a snapshot view of how young people in a large city and in rural villages get supplies of cannabis.

The 182 young people interviewed were aged between 11 and 19. To participate in the research, young people had to fit one of two criteria: that they had used cannabis on at least one occasion in the three months prior to interview and/or had brokered access or sold cannabis within the six months prior to interview. This group is therefore unlikely to be representative of young people in general.

The average age at first cannabis use among respondents was 13, with many first being introduced to the drug by friends. The majority were regular cannabis users, with two-thirds using at least once a week. The main reasons young people reported for using cannabis were that it helped them relax, it helped them calm down, and it made them feel more sociable. Nearly all (172) of the respondents said they used cannabis with friends because it was fun and sociable. The average (median) spend on cannabis among respondents was £20 per week. Half (90) of the young people funded their use through money they received from parent(s) or family; other common methods were through employment or EMA (Educational Maintenance Award). There was little experimentation with

other drugs, although a fifth had tried some other type of drug, most commonly ecstasy.

Getting hold of cannabis

Nearly all reported cannabis to be 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to get hold of, with 79 per cent stating that they could obtain it in less than an hour. 'Chipping-in' and sharing with friends was a common way of purchasing cannabis for 70 per cent of the sample. Chipping-in was mostly unplanned and spontaneous, usually tied to a social event. The sharing of cannabis was also common, with 78 per cent reporting that they shared cannabis with friends, on average five or six times in the month before interview. Again, the sharing of cannabis was reported as being part of a meaningful social act.

Nearly a quarter of the young people interviewed (41) never bought cannabis themselves, relying on friends to give them some, with a further 16 per cent (29) only accessing cannabis through friends buying on their behalf. The importance of the social network to young people's cannabis transactions came through very strongly. Only 6 per cent reported buying cannabis from an unknown seller. Sellers were described as 'very good friends' (friendship often preceding cannabis transactions) or 'a friend'. Twenty-one per cent bought from an 'acquaintance' – including people known from school and/or friend of friends. Some (10) bought from a family friend or a family member. The average age of sellers was 19 and usually around three years older than those they sold to.

Supplying cannabis

Forty-five per cent of our sample reported some involvement in cannabis transactions. Of these, 37 had brokered access (helping others access cannabis but not for profit) and 22 had sold on only one or two occasions. Thirteen per cent stated that they had been involved in selling cannabis more than once or twice. London respondents were generally more involved in selling than their rural counterparts were. Those who had experience of selling cannabis had generally used cannabis more regularly than the rest of the sample.

Generally, those involved in cannabis transactions, particularly those brokering or who had sold once or twice only, did not perceive themselves as dealers. However, many of these individuals conceded that they could be 'seen' as dealers by others and by the criminal justice system.

While half (91) the young people we interviewed had taken cannabis into school or college and 43 per cent (78) said they had used cannabis while at school or college, only a minority of respondents did this on a regular basis. This appeared to be reflected in the small number of young people who reported having been caught under the influence of, in possession of, or selling/brokering, cannabis. There appeared to be no real consistency by schools on how to deal with drug incidents, and nearly all young people who had been caught reported that the incident had not had an impact on them.

While 33 had been found in possession by the police, none had been caught selling the drug. The vast majority of the sample thought they would be arrested if they were caught

selling cannabis, and over three-quarters felt there was no difference in sanctions between social and commercial supply.

Of the school policies we analysed, most included sections on how an incident is dealt with and when it is appropriate to involve the police. However, many policies were unclear on issues such as the appropriateness of searching pupils. Many policies were also lacking in any input from either pupils or parents, and it was not clear how widely these policies were disseminated.

Discussion

Our findings suggest that cannabis supply to young people, at least in the areas where the research was conducted, had little to do with commercial concerns. Young people's patterns of cannabis acquisition had little or nothing to do with 'drug markets' as they have been conventionally described, and were primarily based around friendship and social networks. Young people were introduced to cannabis by friends, accessed and maintained supplies via friends, as well as passed on and sold cannabis to friends.

Importantly, the cannabis supply mechanisms used by our respondents served to insulate or distance them from more overtly criminal drug markets. An argument often put forward for the decriminalisation or legalisation of cannabis is that such reform would protect young cannabis users against exposure to more harmful patterns of drug use and criminality. For our sample, this 'market separation' appears to have been achieved naturally. Of course we cannot assume that the situation is replicated throughout Britain, though our findings are

consistent with other studies.

The Independent Review (Police Foundation, 2000) recognised the existence of social supply among friends but was not in a position to judge how common it was. This report shows that young people's cannabis use revolves around the kind of social networking and social activities that the Independent Review argued justified a distinction in law between social and commercial supply.

We think that the Independent Review was right in principle, but our findings suggest that, in practice, current approaches to enforcement – whether through accident or design – manage to differentiate between social and commercial supply. Social supply rarely comes to official attention, and when it does, there is already sufficient discretion within the system to respond appropriately. There is, nevertheless, a strong case for ensuring that there is clear guidance, for example from the Association of Chief Police Offices, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Youth Justice Board and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) about the best ways of dealing with offences of social supply committed by young people. Such guidance might present realistic vignettes involving social, semi-social and commercial supply, and propose appropriate ways of handling each situation.

Many of our sample came into contact with cannabis at school, however, the use of cannabis in school was a rare event. The school drugs

policies we considered as part of this research were largely consistent with national guidance, with a few exceptions. However, responses to cannabis incidents were less coherent. Given the impact that permanent exclusion from school can have on a young person and their future prospects, this level of response seems disproportionate. In our view, those involved in the social supply of cannabis detected by schools should not receive a permanent exclusion.

At the time of writing, the government has asked its Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) whether the classification of cannabis should be reversed to Class B. The findings of this study carry oblique implications for reclassification. On the strength of the findings of this study, we very much doubt that a change would have any impact on young people. We have seen how cannabis use is significantly embedded in the social world of many young people, and a marginal change to the drug's legal status – following on the confusion of the last five years – will achieve very little. What is required is consistent, visible provision of accurate and accessible information about the health risks that cannabis use actually represents to young people. The health consequences of regular cannabis use among the young are still a matter of debate, and there is a need for further research to help understand the level of potential risk.

1 Introduction

Supply of drugs to young people is an emotive subject, and discussion is rarely conducted with much reference to evidence. Research on young people's access to drugs is scarce in the UK. Little effort has been put into documenting how the criminal justice or education system deals with young people caught supplying or brokering access (helping others access cannabis but not for profit) to cannabis; and no research has explored the links between practice and policy. However, the potential impact of policies on the lives of young people – and their families and friends – is considerable.

In the eyes of some, the decision to reclassify cannabis as a Class C drug, which took effect in 2004, was a lost opportunity. In the first place, the police guidance which accompanied reclassification left arrangements unchanged for policing those aged under 18 who were found in possession of cannabis. And secondly reclassification did nothing to address the status of offences involving the social supply of cannabis – which may involve large numbers of young cannabis users. Whether the government was right to sidestep either of these issues is hard to judge, because there is a dearth of information on how young people actually get hold of the drug.

The Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act (Police Foundation, 2000) initially set the terms of the debate about young people and social supply. Following reclassification, this important set of issues has remained unresolved. If they are to be addressed, policy needs to be better informed about young people's experiences of cannabis supply, about their understanding of current legislation and about the impact of official responses to this issue. It was with this in mind that the Joseph

Rowntree Foundation commissioned the Institute for Criminal Policy Research and the University of Plymouth to examine how young people gain access to cannabis. To revivify policy debate, what is now needed – and what this study provides – is an account of how young people actually acquire cannabis, and how official agencies respond to those who are caught doing so.

Young people's cannabis use

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in the UK. Just over two and a half million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in England and Wales have used cannabis and a fifth of this age group do so at least once a year (Roe and Man, 2006). Significant minorities of younger age groups also report cannabis experience: 10 per cent of pupils in England between the ages of 11 and 15 have used cannabis within the last year (National Centre for Social Research/ National Foundation for Educational Research (NCSR/NFER), 2007). MORI surveys in 2002 and 2004 found that the average age for young people first trying cannabis was 14.

Although cannabis is the illicit drug that is most widely used by young people, the British Crime Survey (BCS) has suggested a shallow decline over the last decade in cannabis use among young people. Although 'last year' use among 16–24 year olds progressively increased during the 1990s, hitting a peak in 1998 (28 per cent), this decade has seen a fall in 'last year' use; most recently recorded as 21 per cent (Roe and Man, 2006).

There is much less information about how young people actually gain access to cannabis. However, the NCSR/NFER (2006) survey

showed that a quarter of 11–15 year olds have been offered cannabis. By the age of 15, two-thirds of young people say they know where to buy cannabis; a quarter saying it can be bought at school (Ogilvie *et al.*, 2005).

Parker *et al.* (1998; 2000) found that young drug users are unlikely to have contact with people they regard as ‘dealers’. Rather, they gain access to drugs through older brothers and sisters, through friends and friends of friends (see also Goulden and Sondhi, 2001; Highet, 2002). They go on to describe how ‘social supply’ (the purchase of drugs and sharing among friends with little or no financial gain) often includes the sale of drugs to friends at cost – or with a modest mark-up so the seller can finance their own drug use (Parker *et al.*, 2001; Measham *et al.*, 2000). This issue of ‘social supply’ was considered by the Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act (Police Foundation, 2000) and also by our own work on cannabis (May *et al.*, 2002; Hough *et al.*, 2003). Whether the law is properly tailored to the reality of young people’s supply networks remains questionable – especially as the maximum penalty for offences of cannabis supply remained unchanged when the drug was reclassified.

The extent of young people’s involvement in cannabis cultivation is unknown, though anecdote suggests that older teenagers may be involved. In a previous Joseph Rowntree Foundation study, we found that motivation among adults for cultivating cannabis varied (Hough *et al.*, 2003). Some grew for commercial reasons, though the majority whom we located grew for themselves or for their social circle.¹ The main motivations given for home cultivation were the poor quality of purchased

cannabis, the high prices, and the desire to avoid involvement with criminally active dealers. These reasons will apply in equal measure to young people, though those still living with their parents may have less scope for home cultivation.

‘Social supply’

The Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Police Foundation, 2000) broached the issue of ‘social supply’. It drew attention to the difficulties in defining adequately what constitutes supply, as the Misuse of Drugs Act does not distinguish between acts of supply among friends and supply for gain. In particular, the Review focused on the concept of social supply, as it argued that acts of possession and supply often go together. It suggested that small groups of friends might decide to use a drug together, and then nominate one of the group to buy it; this individual would then be liable to be charged with supplying the drug. The Review recommended that, in such circumstances, where there was a shared intention to acquire drugs for personal use, the individual making the purchase should be charged with possession rather than supply. The Home Affairs Select Committee (2002), however was unconvinced by the Review’s argument and rejected their recommendation. The Committee stated:

We do not agree with the Police Foundation. Those guilty of ‘social supply’ should not escape prosecution for this offence on the basis that their act of supply was to their friends for their personal consumption. We believe that this act of ‘social supply’, while on a different scale

from commercial supply, is nonetheless a crime which must be punished. (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2002, col. 82)

Cannabis use in schools and colleges

Schools provide the central setting for young people's contact with one another. Some young people will use cannabis on school or college premises; some will buy cannabis from fellow students; others will sell it or act as intermediaries. However, drug- and alcohol-related behaviour made up only 6 per cent of the reasons given for permanent exclusions and 2 per cent of all fixed-period exclusions from maintained primary, secondary and special schools in 2005/06 (DfES, 2007). The statistics do not record the percentage of incidents that were related to cannabis, though this is likely to be high.

Although the percentage of both fixed-term and permanent exclusions for drugs and alcohol appears to be relatively low in comparison with other misdemeanours, such as persistent disruptive behaviour (fixed term 21 per cent; permanent 30 per cent) and physical assault against pupils (fixed term 18 per cent; permanent 16 per cent), considerable media coverage has been devoted to the use of drugs and alcohol in schools and of the potential ways to combat this, as the following headlines typify:

Cannabis and booze a 'threat to schools' (*The Guardian*, 2006a)

Schools let loose the dogs in war on drugs (*The Times*, 2004)

Kent schools to introduce random drug tests (*The Guardian*, 2006b)

Schools and colleges have a number of policy documents to help guide them in the management of drugs and dealing with drug incidents on their premises. The DfES paper *Drugs: Guidance for Schools* (2004) provides guidance to schools on all matters relating to drugs. As well as providing direction on all matters relating to drug education and supporting the needs of pupils, it discusses the management of drugs in the school community and the development of a policy which sets out the school's role in relation to all drug matters. As the DfES document states:

All schools are expected to have a policy which sets out the school's role in relation to all drug matters. Those without a drug policy should develop one as a matter of urgency. (DfES, 2004)

Similar guidance, *Drugs: Guidance for Further Education Institutions* (2004), was developed by DrugScope and Alcohol Concern to support further education (FE) establishments to draw out the issues relevant to FE institutions. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has also published *Joining Forces. Drugs: Guidance for Police Working with Schools and Colleges* (2006), which details how the police, in partnership with schools and colleges can deal with drug matters, building on the guidance of both the DfES and Drugscope/Alcohol Concern.

Work conducted by the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2005) found that nearly all secondary schools and the majority of primary schools have a drugs policy. However, the report also highlights weaknesses; in particular, it states that school policies often fail to specify whether incidents that take place outside school premises or outside the school

day fall under the remit of the school's drug policy.

As discussed above, the focus on drug and alcohol use in schools and colleges has, in recent years, become more intense. For example, in 2006, schools in Kent introduced a pilot scheme which involved random drug testing in secondary schools (*The Guardian*, 2006b). There also appears to be a more zealous approach to dealing with drug issues within certain primarily private schools. Anthony Seldon, head teacher of Wellington College, was quoted in the *Independent on Sunday* as saying:

I have never believed in giving children who bring drugs on to school premises a second chance. It means that, for some, to be 'busted' for drugs is a badge of honour ... Random drug testing and sniffer dogs are other devices. Nothing is ruled out in the interests of protecting those in my charge. (Independent on Sunday, 2007b)

A practitioners' group on school behaviour and discipline (DfES, 2005) recommended that, if the then Violent Crime Reduction Bill (now Violent Crime Reduction Act) became law, the DfES should monitor and evaluate the new legal powers to search pupils without consent for weapons and review whether this right should be extended to include drugs.

The reclassification of cannabis

Over the last few decades, there has been considerable discussion about the cannabis laws in Britain. During the 1990s, the general public became increasingly tolerant of cannabis use and started to question the efficacy of the then cannabis legislation (Newcombe, 1999; *The*

Guardian, 2001; ICM, 2001; Pearson and Shiner, 2002). The media also lent their support to a review of the legislation. In 2001, the then Home Secretary David Blunkett announced that he was considering reclassifying cannabis from a Class B to a Class C drug. The key consequence of this would be to reduce the maximum sentence for the possession of cannabis from five to two years – which would transform it into a non-arrestable offence.

Although there was unequivocal support for reclassification within some sections of government and among many senior police officers, others were less enthusiastic. The Police Federation² and some senior police officers were unhappy at the prospect of losing the power of arrest for possession offences. And although the media had originally been supportive of the change when government was resisting it, David Blunkett's announcement triggered a change of heart in some sections of the media, and stories about the risks of reclassification became commonplace. The government announced in the summer of 2003 a curious compromise: cannabis would be reclassified to Class C but this would be preceded by an amendment to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 to make possession of a Class C drug an arrestable offence. In January 2004, reclassification finally came into effect – with the Criminal Justice Act 2003 preserving the arrest powers that reformers had sought to abolish.

At the same time, the government also introduced a further change to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Other things being equal, the reclassification of cannabis would have meant that the maximum penalty for offences of cannabis supply would have fallen from fourteen years to five. However, the maximum

penalty for supplying Class C drugs (now including cannabis) was raised to 14 years. In other words, the government reclassified cannabis, while ensuring that the practical legal consequences for both possession and supply remained unchanged.

Since reclassification, the discussion on cannabis classification has not abated. The lead-up to the 2005 General Election saw the disquiet surrounding cannabis intensify. The then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, asked the ACMD to examine the evidence on the association between cannabis and mental health problems, particularly among young people. The ACMD (2006) reported back to the Home Secretary recommending that cannabis should remain a Class C drug; subsequently Charles Clarke announced in January 2006 that cannabis would remain Class C.

The debate is still ongoing within media and political circles, particularly regarding the issues of mental health and the claims that THC levels within certain strands of cannabis have dramatically increased over the last few decades. The *Independent on Sunday*, former advocates for the decriminalisation of cannabis, printed a headline 'Cannabis: an apology' (*Independent on Sunday*, 2007a) and recanted their support for the decriminalisation of cannabis; a campaign they had supported since 1997. The Conservative party has also reconsidered its position and now firmly advocates reclassifying cannabis back to Class B, demonstrated unambiguously in their policy commission report *Breakthrough Britain*, which recommends greater penalties for cannabis possession and supply offences (*The Observer*, 2007).

At the time of writing, the new Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the new Home

Secretary Jacqui Smith, as part of a wider review of the drugs strategy, have asked the ACMD to – yet again – consider the issue of reclassification, with a possibility of returning cannabis to a Class B drug.

The policing of cannabis

The limited nature of the changes to the cannabis laws and the confused manner in which they were introduced caused concern among many; in particular, critics questioned how cannabis possession offences would be policed. Prior to reclassification taking place, ACPO published a guidance document to operational officers which stated that, although the power of arrest was available for simple cannabis possession offences, the presumption should be against using this power unless certain aggravating circumstances were present, for example if an officer was unable to verify a suspect's name. In cases of simple possession, the ACPO guidance states that adults should be issued with a cannabis warning.³ Importantly, one issue overlooked by the media, but highlighted in the ACPO guidance was the policing of young people. The ACPO guidance applied only to people aged 18 or over. This was because the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) set out procedures for reprimands and final warnings for young offenders that are incompatible with the guidance. Young people that come to the attention of the police on suspicion of committing an offence should normally be arrested. Once arrested the disposal options available to the police are a reprimand, final warning or charge. Young people aged 17 and under found in possession of cannabis are thus ineligible for a cannabis warning. In 2004,

the first year of reclassification, 4,769 young people aged 17 and under found in possession of cannabis were given reprimands, while 2,544 received final warnings (Mwenda, 2005).

In 2007, ACPO updated their guidance to police officers to take account of the introduction of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCAP) 2005, which revised the framework of arrest and search powers previously governed by PACE. Under SOCAP, the legislative distinction between arrestable and non-arrestable offences was abolished. All offences, including cannabis possession, became arrestable under certain conditions. Officers must now consider whether using the power of arrest is a proportionate and necessary response to the offence. In terms of policing young people, the 2007 ACPO guidance stresses that young people aged 17 and under found in possession of cannabis should still be dealt with in accordance with the CDA, but states that on some occasions an officer may deem it more appropriate to avoid an arrest and to take less intrusive action, such as taking the young person home. The case can then be referred to the Youth Offending Team for a disposal decision, and the young person kept away from the formal setting of the police station.

Since reclassification, concern has consistently been expressed about young people not fully understanding the ramifications of the change and the consequences for them if they are found in possession of the drug. Although the government launched a number of campaigns highlighting the illegality of possessing and supplying cannabis and in these detailed how young people would be processed if found in possession of the drug, research by May *et al.* (2007) found that, in their sample of young people, although two-thirds were aware

that cannabis had been reclassified to a Class C drug, only half were aware that adults and young people were treated differently.

Aims and methods of the study

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned this study to examine how young people gain access to cannabis. The study's aims were to:

- provide a detailed account of the ways in which young people gain access to cannabis;
- explore the impact of supply routes on different aspects of young people's lives, including access to other drugs, contact with the police, schooling and relationships with families and friends;
- examine the relationships between age, gender and ethnicity and access to cannabis;
- explain young people's notions of drug dealing and social supply and how they relate to buying patterns and behaviour;
- examine the impact of school policies on young people found to be selling, or brokering access, to cannabis;
- explore whether current school and college practices have altered in the light of experience of legislative changes;
- examine the extent and nature of the involvement of the police with cases where young people have been found to be selling cannabis;
- outline young people's understanding of the cannabis supply legislation.

Interviews with young people

To meet the aims of the research, the study principally relied on semi-structured interviews with young people aged between 11 and 19. All respondents were purposively selected to fit one of two criteria: that they had used cannabis on at least one occasion in the three months prior to interview and /or had brokered access or sold cannabis within the six months prior to interview.

For this research study, the definition of seller is a young person who sells cannabis for money or other goods. While some young people may sell primarily to make a financial profit, others may sell to fund their own use. The term broker in the report describes a young person who helps friends or acquaintances to gain access to cannabis. The level of involvement in this process can vary. It can include passing on the contact details of a seller to another young person, introducing a young person to a seller or actually buying cannabis on their behalf. Brokering is essentially an altruistic act to help a friend or an acquaintance and would not result in the broker being financially rewarded, although some may receive a small amount of cannabis for their efforts.

In total, we interviewed 182 young people, 90 of whom were from sites in the South-West, and 92 from London sites. Table 1 provides demographic information on the sample.

As Table 2 shows, respondents were recruited from a variety of sources such as youth centres, FE colleges, school exclusion units and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). Where possible, we also employed snowballing techniques.⁴ Just under three-fifths (106) of the respondents had experience of being excluded from school. Of these, four-fifths (84) had been

Table 1 A demographic breakdown of the sample

	<i>n</i> =182 (%)
Male	131 (72)
Female	51 (28)
<i>Age</i>	
12	2 (1)
13	8 (4)
14	20 (11)
15	54 (30)
16	53 (29)
17	26 (14)
18	12 (7)
19	7 (4)
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
White	126 (69)
Mixed	6 (3)
Black	45 (25)
Asian	2 (1)
Chinese or other	3 (2)
<i>Residence</i>	
Living with parents	161 (89)
Living with relatives	9 (5)
Living with friends	1 (1)
Private rented	2 (1)
Council/Housing association	3 (2)
Local Authority care	3 (2)
Other	3 (2)
<i>Occupation</i>	
Attending school	75 (41)
Attending college	76 (42)
Excluded from school	5 (3)
Full-time employment	5 (3)
Unemployed	11 (6)
Training course/apprenticeship	5 (3)
Other	5 (3)

Table 2 Recruitment of the young people sample

Source of recruitment	Number
Youth centre	112
School or college	20
YOT	26
School exclusion unit	20
Through snowballing	4

excluded for a fixed term, while just over a third (35) said they had been permanently excluded.⁵ The decision to recruit school excludees was to ensure that, where their exclusion related to cannabis, this would be included in the study.

It must be remembered that the research team were purposively selecting young people who had experience of either using or selling/ brokering access to cannabis and therefore the sample of young people in the study will not be nationally representative.

Other research data

To complement the interview data from young people, we also conducted 14 semi-structured interviews of professionals. Professionals interviewed for the study included; police officers, staff from schools and colleges, council school drug co-ordinators and youth workers, all professional respondents had experience of working with young cannabis users and those found to be selling the drug. To understand the impact of school drug policies, all secondary and independent schools and FE colleges within the research sites were contacted and asked to provide a copy of their policy on managing drug incidents. Secondary source data was also collated. These included: school exclusion data and local crime statistics.

Young people were paid to take part in the research. The research sites have been

anonymised to preserve the anonymity of the young people and key professionals who participated in the study. All fieldwork was carried out between June 2006 and April 2007.

Research sites

To capture the regional variation that is likely to exist for cannabis supply and purchasing patterns as well as the professional responses, we selected sites to reflect urban and rural communities, with three sites based in the South-West and four sites in London. During fieldwork, it became apparent that young people in one of the London sites were unwilling to participate in the research. A further site was selected to supplement the interviews already conducted from the other three sites.

South-West sites

The South-West sites (A, B and C) are three rurally situated towns approximately 12–13 miles apart in the same local authority area in an area of outstanding natural beauty. Each of the three towns is surrounded by countryside, but Site C is 12 miles from a major city. Both Sites A and B are ‘hubs’ for the numerous small villages of low population that surround them. Relative to our urban areas, they have poor public transport.

The three areas have population densities lower than the national average (0.92 people per square hectare compared with an average of 3.77 people in England; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2001), while the number of retired people exceeds the national average. The areas have a low proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups: 98.9 per cent

white compared with 90.9 per cent at a national level (ONS, 2001). In each of the sites, young people aged 10–24 make up around one fifth of the total population.

There is just one secondary school (called a community college) and six to eight (often very small) primary schools in each of the sites. The number of students achieving five or more GCSEs grade A*–C ranges from 55.2 to 71.2 per cent in our sites compared with the national average of 52.9 per cent in England. There is also a low percentage of people with no qualifications: 18.5–27 per cent in our rural areas compared with 28.9 per cent for the country as a whole. There are few amenities for young people in our rural areas; each area has just one youth centre and one public sports centre.

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2004), the local authority was ranked 230 out of 354 in England.⁶ Levels of unemployment are lower than the national average (ONS, 2001). Total numbers of crime per 1,000 of the population show that crime rates in each of the sites are also lower than the national average, with levels of 41.9–93.6 in our sites and 104.9 in England and Wales. Within the county, there were 168 fixed-period exclusions and one permanent exclusion for drug- and alcohol-related reasons in the academic year 2005/06.

London sites

One of the London sites is situated in an inner borough; the remaining three are in outer London boroughs. All four sites were densely populated and ethnically diverse. Twenty-three to 56 per cent of the population were from BME groups (ONS, 2001). Around a quarter of the

populations in all four sites were aged 19 or under, in keeping with the national average (ONS, 2001). All the sites had good transport networks.

All four sites are ranked in the top one hundred deprived areas in the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (DCLG, 2004), with two ranked in the top 50 and one in the top 20. Unemployment rates in all four sites were higher than the national average. The proportion of residents living in either council or social housing was higher in all four sites compared with the national average (20 per cent), with 40 per cent of residents in one site living in this type of accommodation (ONS, 2001).

The number of students achieving five or more GCSE's grade A*–C in 2004/05 although slightly above the national average in one site, was slightly below the national average in the remaining three sites (DfES, 2006). During 2005/06, only seven people across the four sites had been permanently excluded for a drug- or alcohol-related incident, while 68 received a fixed-term exclusion for this type of incident, with this more common in site E.

Structure of the report

In Chapter 2, we describe how young people in our sample first became exposed to cannabis, their early using experiences, as well their current patterns of use and their motivation for using the drug. Chapter 3 presents data on the different ways in which young people accessed their cannabis, how young people viewed those that they obtain their cannabis from and the sharing and buying of cannabis with friends. Chapter 4 describes the extent and nature of

Cannabis supply and young people

the young people's involvement in the supply of cannabis, including examining the type of transactions they are involved in and the motivations they have for becoming involved in cannabis supply. Chapter 5 examines how

educational establishments and the police respond to incidents involving young people and cannabis. Finally, Chapter 6 outlines the policy implications of our findings.

2 Young people's cannabis use

In this chapter, we describe how the young people in our sample first became exposed to cannabis use and their early using experiences. We look at their cannabis using patterns and their motivation for using the drug, as well as how much they spent on and how they financed their drug use. Finally, we consider other drugs that they have used.

Young people's first experience of cannabis

On average, young people interviewed for this study ($n=182$) first tried cannabis at the age of 13. This ranged from 8 to 18 years. Over half (59 per cent) said they first used cannabis prior to their 13th birthday. Table 3 gives a more detailed breakdown of age at first use.

Four-fifths ($n=145$) stated that they were introduced to cannabis by friends; the remainder stated that they were introduced to the drug by siblings (8), other family members (9), acquaintances (5) or a partner (4). Only two young people said that they had been introduced to cannabis by someone who sold

drugs. This is comparable with the NCSR/NFER (2006) research which found that 83 per cent of their sample were first introduced to cannabis by a friend.

Just over half of our sample (54 per cent, $n=99$) first used with a group of friends, while 23 per cent first used with either one or two friends (41). Twenty per cent (36) said they first used at either their own home or a friend's house, a similar number (38) reported that they first used in an area such as a park or woods. Just under a fifth (34) said they had first tried cannabis in a public place, while 26 young people said they first used the drug at a party or festival.

The majority (66 per cent) were asked by friends whether they wanted to try cannabis; 17 per cent had sought out the opportunity themselves, asking others if they could try it. When describing their motivation for trying cannabis, 38 per cent (70) said they were curious or wanted to experiment with cannabis, while 32 per cent (58) said their friends were using it and therefore they wanted to.

Table 3 Age at first use

Age	Number in sample	London sites	South-West sites
8	2	1	1
9	3	0	3
10	9	5	4
11	11	6	5
12	34	17	17
13	49	20	29
14	40	20	20
15	24	15	9
16	9	7	2
17	0	0	0
18	1	1	0
Total	182	92	90

Patterns of use

Many of the young people had used cannabis very recently. Table 4 shows that almost two-thirds (114) had used cannabis in the week before interview. Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent, $n=118$) were regular cannabis users, using it every day (34), two to three times a week (58) or once a week (26). Everyday use was higher in the London sample (22) compared with their rural counterparts (12). Male respondents ($n=131$) used cannabis more frequently than females did ($n=51$); just under half the female respondents (25) used once a week or more compared with just under three-quarters of males (93).

Patterns of use were well established. Two-fifths of the sample (40 per cent) reported that they had been smoking the same weekly / monthly amount for either a year (45) or more than six months (27). Patterns of use had, however, altered over time, with 73 per cent (133) of young people reporting some change in their level of use. Within this group, there was virtually an even split between those who mentioned their cannabis use had increased (64) and those who mentioned it had decreased (59). Nine stated that their use fluctuated. There

Table 4 When did you last use cannabis?

	$n=182$ (%)
Today	22 (12)
Yesterday	36 (20)
In the last couple of days	27 (15)
In the last week	29 (16)
In the last month	25 (14)
In the last three months	32 (18)
Stopped	10 (5)
Missing	1 (1)

were marked variations between the sites. Over half the young people in the rural sites ($n=70$) felt their cannabis use had increased (39), while 23 felt it had decreased. By contrast, in London ($n=63$) 25 believed their use had increased, while 36 felt it had decreased. A possible explanation for this could be that respondents in the London sites were generally older than their rural counterparts and thus more experienced in their cannabis use and had more established stable using patterns.

Across the two research areas, the main reason given for increasing use ($n=64$) was that that they needed to use more cannabis to experience the same effect as before (26). As one respondent put it:

[It has] gone up, after a while [it] didn't affect me as much and [I now] have to use more to get stoned.

Other reasons given were that cannabis was now more accessible to them (7), boredom (5), the influence of friends (5) and that they enjoyed using it (5).

For those that stated their use had decreased ($n=59$), reasons given ranged from financial concerns (11), health problems (10), worries over becoming addicted (9), general loss of interest in using (8) and concerns that cannabis use might affect their employment or school work (8). The following quotes are illustrative:

Used to smoke everyday – cut down. It's just money man, it takes money man.

I've cut down. The school I'm attending is a sports academy. It was affecting my health, I was running out of breath.

I use less, don't want to get addicted to it. [I] know what problems it can cause.

We asked young people what was the main type of cannabis they used. Fifty-five per cent (101) said they used weed, while 72 said that they used skunk. Only 18 young people said they used cannabis resin, while 15 said they used all three. Skunk use was more common in the London sites (45) than in the South-West (27). Resin use was mostly in the rural areas (15). The vast majority (92 per cent) of respondents said that they generally smoked cannabis. Thirty-one per cent (56) also used a pipe, bong or vaporiser; all but six of these young people were from the rural sites.

Why use cannabis?

When looking to establish how young people gain access to cannabis, it is important to examine young people's motives for wanting to use cannabis. Figure 1 shows the reasons given by our sample.

The most common responses were that it helped them relax (54 per cent), it helped them

calm down (32 per cent) and it made them sociable (24 per cent),¹ as the quotes below indicate:

Life is a constant headache and cannabis is like Nurofen to me.

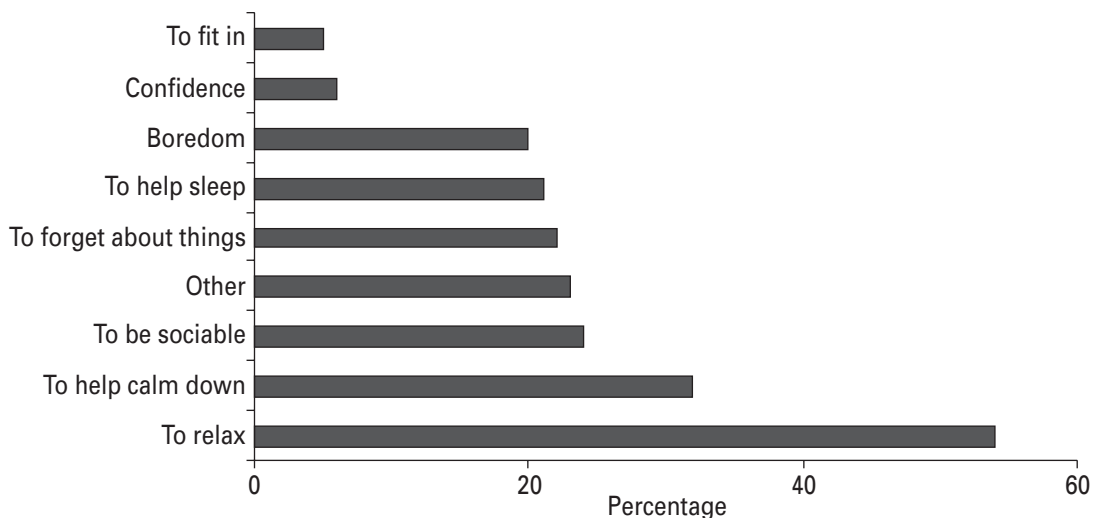
[I use] mainly to help me relax – it's a relaxing feeling. I don't know how to explain it, it helps me feel mellow.

To relax. It just feels really positive when I take it, takes all the negatives away. I feel chilled out.

It makes a typical Friday night. Somebody would have some and they would smoke it at friend's house. It is a Friday night thing. It is a social thing.

Although using cannabis to relax and calm down were the most common responses in both research areas, there were some differences. Using to be sociable was a more common response among respondents from the South-West. This is unsurprising, as young people

Figure 1 Why do you use cannabis?



in the rural sites were more likely to purchase cannabis with their friends than London respondents were, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. An aid to sleep was mentioned more frequently by respondents based in London.

With whom do young people use cannabis?

Nearly all (172) the young people said that they often used cannabis with their friends, while 35 per cent (64) also said that they used on their own; the majority (48) of these young people were from the London sites. Sixty-five per cent (118) preferred using cannabis with friends. The main reasons given for this were that it is more fun (30) and more sociable to use with friends (35). The following quotes are illustrative:

I] prefer with my friends, 'cause when everyone smokes, everyone talks, everyone cracks jokes.

It makes you feel happy when you are with friends.

Only 14 per cent (25) said they preferred using alone, the main reason given was that it was less stressful and less hassle to use on their own (11). The preference for using cannabis with friends was borne out by just over half (93) the sample saying that most of their friends used cannabis, while 34 per cent (62) said some of their friends used. However, only 20 per cent (37) said using cannabis was an important part of their social life. Eleven of this group said it was because all their friends used cannabis, while seven said using cannabis was something to do.

Young people do not come into contact with cannabis just through friendship networks. Half

the sample (91) said that they knew of a family member who used cannabis. Within this group, 32 stated their brothers used, and 27 said their sisters did. Nineteen mentioned their father and 15 their mother. Uncles (16) and cousins (15) were also mentioned.

Funding use

We asked young people how much money they normally spent on cannabis in a week. The average weekly spend among the 143 who answered this question was £20 (median), which ranged up to £180.² Thirty-eight of the sample said they never paid for their cannabis. As one might expect, the average spend of the 67 London respondents was higher, at £25, than that of the 76 in the South-West, who spent £13.75. Some (33) reported buying enough to last them a week, while 27 said they bought on a daily basis. Table 5 outlines how respondents funded their use.

Table 5 shows that, although almost half (49 per cent) the sample funded their use through money from parents or other family members, almost a third (29 per cent) funded their use

Table 5 How the young fund their cannabis use

Method of funding	n (%)
Money from parents/ family	90 (49)
Employment	53 (29)
EMA	20 (11)
Dinner money	7 (4)
Benefits	9 (5)
Criminal activity	6 (3)
Selling cannabis	6 (3)
Given cannabis	41 (23)
Other	18 (10)

from their wages; just over a tenth said that they spent a proportion of their EMA on their cannabis use. Very few young people stated that they funded their use through criminal activity (6) or selling cannabis (6). We found marked differences between the two sites. In the South-West, 42 young people funded their use through work, whereas in London funding came in the guise of EMA (16) while a large number did not buy at all (28).

Other drug use

Just over a fifth (22 per cent, $n=40$) of the sample stated that they had tried other drugs. Of these, most (32) had used ecstasy, while 18 said they had tried cocaine. Other drugs that respondents had used included poppers (9), magic mushrooms (6) and powder amphetamine ('speed') (5). Only one young person said they had tried crack cocaine, and none of the sample had tried heroin. Perhaps surprisingly, more young people in the rural sites (27) had tried other drugs than in the London sites (13). More young people in the South-West had used ecstasy (21) than those in London had (11). There was little variation between the two sites in the numbers who had used powder cocaine. Twenty-three said they had tried other drugs in the three months prior to interview, 19 had used ecstasy and five powder cocaine.

Summary

The average age at first cannabis use among respondents was 13, with many first being introduced to the drug by friends. The majority of the sample were regular users, with two-thirds using at least once a week. Although patterns of use were relatively stable, most respondents reported that their cannabis use had increased or decreased over a period of time.

The main reasons young people reported using cannabis were that it helped them relax, it helped them calm down and it made them feel more sociable. Nearly all (172) of the respondents said they used cannabis with friends, because it was fun and sociable. A third of the sample said they preferred to use on their own, because they saw it as less hassle and less stressful.

The average (median) spend on cannabis was £20 per week. Half (90) of the young people funded their use through money they received from parent(s) or family; other common methods were through employment or EMA. There was little experimentation with other drugs, although a fifth had tried some other type of drug, most commonly ecstasy.

3 Getting cannabis

This chapter presents our findings on the different ways in which young people gained access to cannabis. Respondents were asked about ease of access; who they normally obtained cannabis from and about the kind of locations where transactions normally took place. We also examine whether young people viewed those they obtained their cannabis from as ‘dealers’ and about the sharing and buying of cannabis with friends.

We use the term ‘seller’ to refer to someone involved in the supply of cannabis for monetary return. The terms ‘supplier’ and ‘drug dealer’ were considered both too ambiguous and wide-ranging. The latter term is also too loaded with negative connotations to be helpful for a dispassionate analysis.

How young people obtain cannabis

Nearly all (93 per cent) respondents said that cannabis was either ‘very easy’ or ‘fairly easy’ to get. Of those who provided estimates of the time it took to get cannabis ($n=139$), four-fifths (79 per cent) said they could get it in less than an hour, with a further 11 per cent stating that they could get it on the same day. Only 4 per cent mentioned that it took them more than one day, with seven saying it took a couple of days and one saying that it took up to a week. Londoners found it easier than those in the South-West areas to get cannabis rapidly.

A number of ways of accessing cannabis were reported. Over half (55 per cent) bought direct from a seller they knew personally, as a friend, acquaintance or family member (‘known sellers’). Around a quarter (23 per cent) did not buy cannabis themselves but were given it by a friend, and a further 16 per cent reported

that a friend bought cannabis on their behalf. Only a minority of respondents (6 per cent) normally obtained cannabis by purchasing it directly from an ‘unknown seller’, that is, they did not know their seller on a personal level and only contacted this person when they were buying cannabis from them. Just one respondent reported growing their own cannabis, and one other said that a family member bought for them. Nearly all our sample obtained cannabis from or through friends, friends of friends or family members, highlighting the importance of friendship and social networks as a supply source for young people within our research sites.

Social networks as central to young people’s supply

Of those that normally obtained cannabis by buying from a known seller ($n=100$), over two-thirds (69 per cent) described their main seller as a friend, and half of these (or 34 per cent of the total), said they were ‘very good’ friends. A further 21 per cent bought from an acquaintance (including people known from school and the local area and friends of friends), while only seven respondents bought directly from a family friend and three from a family member.

The unknown sellers

While 23 of the rural purchasers obtained their cannabis through a friend who bought on their behalf, only six respondents from our urban areas did the same. Interestingly, nine of the ten respondents that reported buying cannabis directly from an unknown seller were from London. Of this group, four – all of whom were from the same locality – reported purchasing cannabis through particular local ‘cafés’. Barely

qualifying as conventional cafés, these premises were relatively bare of goods and operated mainly as meeting places for local people to buy cannabis.

Of the other five London respondents who bought directly from an unknown seller, three said that they met their seller in quiet local streets, and two reported buying from a more organised network of cannabis sellers. These two described how they contacted their seller by phone to arrange a meeting place with a ‘runner’ or ‘deliverer’ somewhere local. The two respondents who purchased cannabis in this way first heard they could do so because their seller was known locally as a cannabis seller. However, one of the respondents reported that they were first approached by the deliverer and offered a contact number. The one respondent from the South-West who bought directly from an unknown seller reported first hearing about the seller through friends of friends. This respondent bought cannabis by phoning the seller and arranging a convenient place to meet.

Age and contact with the cannabis market

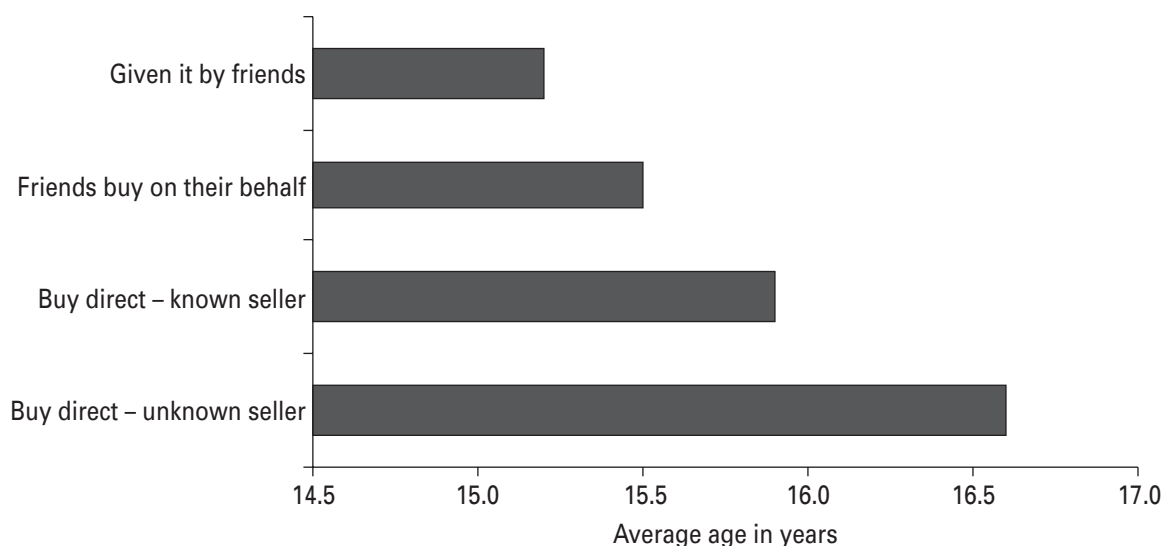
Age differences were also noticeable when examining how respondents obtained their cannabis. Figure 2 shows that the average age of those who bought direct from an unknown seller was higher than for those who bought from a known seller, which in turn was higher than for those whose friends bought it for them and for those who were given cannabis. Clearly, direct involvement in the cannabis market becomes more likely as people get older and have more experience of cannabis.

There were some gender differences. Nine out of the ten who bought direct from ‘unknown sellers’ were male, and females were more likely than males to be given cannabis by friends.

Cannabis transactions

We asked those who bought cannabis ($n=110$) about how they arranged and completed their transactions. By far the most common means reported to us was for a buyer to phone a seller

Figure 2 Ways of obtaining cannabis, by age



and arrange a place to meet (68 per cent) or to phone a seller and conduct the transaction at the seller's house (26 per cent). A further 22 per cent said that they usually went to their seller's house without calling first.

Meeting places

The transactions took place in a variety of locations.¹ The most common locations were streets or alleyways (28 per cent) and sellers' homes (22 per cent). Parks were often mentioned (18 per cent), as were their own or friends' homes (16 per cent) and train, tube or bus stations (14 per cent). Eleven per cent indicated that they had no specific meeting place.

Twenty-six respondents (11 per cent) referred to a specific well-known place where cannabis could be bought. Such places were more typical in the rural sites (17) than in the urban sites (9). Two of the rural sites had such locations. These were also focal points for young people to congregate, and served both as meeting places for local youths and for cannabis buyers and sellers across a wider geographical area.

Amount and type of cannabis bought

We asked young cannabis users to talk about the quantity of cannabis they normally purchased per transaction. Young people in London were more likely to refer to the amounts they bought in monetary terms, while those from the South-West tended to talk in terms of weight.

Of the 67 young people from London who answered this question, the majority (39) bought £10-worth at a time. Nine bought £5 deals and eight between £15 and £20. Of the 46 young people in the South-West who gave answers, 20 usually bought an eighth, 19 a 'teenth'² and 7

between an eighth and a tenth. Given that the amount of money spent on different weights of cannabis varied depending on a variety of factors such as the type of cannabis, it was difficult to make detailed comparisons between the two areas.

Of the 144 young people who specified what type of cannabis they bought, a large minority (43 per cent) said they usually bought 'skunk',³ and a third (33 per cent) bought weed. Only 14 young people (10 per cent) bought resin, all but one of whom was from the South-West.

The sellers

We asked for details about the sellers from whom young people bought cannabis, and 110 provided details. Of these, 43 per cent bought from one or two people. A further 31 per cent bought from three to five different people, while 25 per cent bought from more than five people (range 6–50). On average, respondents had been buying from their main supplier for 16 months (ranging from 1 to 48 months).

Sellers were generally male. Only three respondents referred to female sellers, and one bought from both male and female sellers. The average age of the sellers was reported to be 19 years (ranging from 12 to 45 years). Young people tended to buy from sellers who were – on average – three years older than themselves, as Table 6 shows.

Forty-one per cent thought that their seller sold mainly to friends and acquaintances. The following quotes are indicative of young people's descriptions of their seller:

He's sorting out his mates – sells to a few but not big time.

Table 6 Age of respondents and average age of person from whom they were buying cannabis

Age of respondent	Average age of seller	<i>n</i>
13	15	4
14	17	9
15	18	25
16	19	32
17	20	22
18	18	5
19	22	7
Total	19	104

[They are] *not dealers, they make a little bit of money – but not loads, they’re helping out friends. If you owe them money they won’t chase it up or beat you up.*

[He is] *not a dealer – a ‘run around boy’. Doesn’t gain money. Doing a favour.*

The following quotes are illustrative of how our sample of buyers became acquainted with their sellers:

[I was] *asking a friend, do you know anyone who has got any weed? A lot of my friends are friends with dealers ...*

They [the people who sell cannabis] are friends from school and also from outside of school. We socialise together. I knew them before we started using cannabis.

According to our respondents, the majority of sellers only supplied cannabis, although 27 stated that their sellers also supplied other drugs. Other drugs sold by sellers included: ecstasy (20) and powder cocaine (3). Cannabis sellers who also sold other drugs were mentioned by more young people in our rural areas (23) than those interviewed in London (4). Sixteen respondents also stated that their seller grew their own cannabis.

The following case-study highlights young people’s typical purchasing patterns, the ways in which they access their cannabis and also their typical suppliers.

Case study 1 Easy access and buying from friends

John, aged 16, was attending college and living at home with his parents in the South-West. He smoked cannabis about once a month and had done so for a year. He spent about £10 a month.

John’s main way of buying cannabis was from a friend who sold it, but he also relied at times on his friends to buy. In total John bought from five different sellers and stated that cannabis was ‘very easy’ to access. He described some sellers as sometimes hard to get hold of and others as easy. Some were within walking distance. John said that he never had to wait longer than an hour to make a purchase.

John usually bought a ‘teenth’ or an ‘eighth’ of weed. He made contact in ‘lots

(Continued)

of different ways', but often used a mobile. John referred to two different places where he met sellers to buy his cannabis. One was a local skate park, a preferred meeting place because it was hidden and provided safety, and the other was an easily accessible outside area:

(From the skate park one) can keep good watch because of location, (it's) out of the way ... (The outside area) because everyone knows it and it's easy access for everyone.

John's main seller was a 17-year-old male from whom John had been purchasing for five months. John described him as a good friend whom he went to school with and whom he was friends with before he started to buy from him. John said he had got to know his seller better since buying cannabis from him. John's main seller sells only cannabis, and sells only to friends and friends of friends. John's understanding was that his seller bought cannabis from a slightly older, 'bigger' dealer.

Experiences of buying and sharing cannabis with friends

Buying with friends ('chipping in') was a common way of purchasing cannabis for many (70 per cent) of our respondents. There was, however, considerable variation between the rural and urban sites. More ($n=75$, 83 per cent) from our rural sites reported buying with friends than from the London sites ($n=52$, 57 per cent). Of those who had experience of buying cannabis with friends ($n=127$), only 19 per cent described it as something they did 'most' or 'all'

of the time. The majority described 'chipping-in' with friends as something they did every now and then (38 per cent).

Thirty-six per cent of respondents said that they had last bought with friends within the two to seven days prior to the interview. A quarter had chipped-in within the last month, and the rest had done so in the previous three months. Many reasons were given for purchasing cannabis in this manner, but most commonly (37 per cent) respondents referred to the fact that chipping-in allowed them to purchase cannabis when they only had a small amount of money. This seemed to be particularly important for young people aged between 15 and 17 years.

Just over a quarter of respondents viewed buying cannabis with friends as a social activity. Respondents also believed that by buying together they would get more for their money, as their seller often gives them a better deal. Again, there were differences between rural and urban sites; A greater number (27) of respondents from the South-West perceived chipping in with friends as social activity than those in London did (17). In addition, the motive to get a 'better deal' was more important for young people in the rural (25) than in the urban sites (11).

Over three-quarters of the sample described chipping in as a spontaneous rather than a planned event. On average, each young person contributed around £5 when buying cannabis with friends, although this ranged from £2 to £20. Seventy-four respondents described the process of chipping-in in more detail, the majority (41) of whom stated that one of the group would buy the cannabis while the rest waited; 24, however, tended to buy as a group.

Over three-quarters of respondents (78 per

cent) reported that they shared their cannabis with friends. A quarter had done so a few days before the interview, and just under a fifth had shared in the week prior to the interview. On average, young people had shared five or six times in the month before interview. In the six months prior to interview, respondents reported sharing a rough average of 15 times.

Some young people identified more than one reason for sharing cannabis with friends.⁴ Most commonly, respondents described it as a process of giving and receiving (35 per cent) and saw sharing as a social activity (23 per cent). A further 19 per cent stated they were always given it by friends, 16 per cent share with friends when they do not have any money or if they ask for it, and 10 per cent reported sharing with friends as a way of helping out a friend and doing them a favour:

Just to be sociable, nicer to pass around so everyone can have some. A way of long term sharing.

It's a social thing. And again, I would say because it is [Site B]. That's what you do in [Site B] you share. It is a way to make friends.

When my friend needs it, I'm not going to say no!

If one of my mates has got money, he'll buy and share it. On another day I might get it and share it.

Two typical cases of young people's involvement in buying and sharing cannabis with friends follow.

Case study 2 Buying and using together

Anna was a 14-year-old cannabis smoker who lived at home with her parents and was still in full-time education. She had been using cannabis for four years, two or three times a week.

Anna bought cannabis with friends 'every now and then', and had done so on five occasions in the month prior to interview. Anna's main motive for buying with friends was financial; she stated that she tended to chip in with friends when she did not have enough money to purchase her own cannabis.

Anna tended to buy with friends when they were hanging out together and felt like they wanted some. Typically, Anna would purchase cannabis with three other girls, who would each put in £5. They would usually purchase an eighth and then divide it so that each person had an equal share. They would then smoke together in public places such as parks or alleyways.

Anna preferred to buy cannabis with friends, rather than alone, because she felt it was safer. She commented that, by buying with friends, she had some support if 'something were to happen' when buying her cannabis

Anna stated that she tended to share her cannabis as it was part of the process of giving and receiving and as a way of helping out friends, as the following quote illustrates:

(Continued)

Friends were asking and they had given me some before. (I shared) to be kind and to give some back.

Case study 3 Buying together to finance use

Steve was 16 years old, lived with his parents and was attending school. He first used cannabis at the age of 14 and, at the time of the interview, was smoking two or three times a week.

Although Steve preferred to buy his own cannabis, he often found himself buying with friends and had done so eight times in the month before the interview. Steve tended to be motivated by financial reasons, and chipped in with friends when he could not afford to buy his own cannabis. However, he enjoyed the social side of buying with his friends.

Steve usually bought with six other friends, often after they had all met up. Each person would usually chip in around £5. Steve discussed how on some occasions, when he and his friends were short of money, their dealer would 'let them off a couple of pounds' which they would then owe him. Usually, Steve and his friends would visit their local dealer together. Once they had bought their cannabis, each one of them would make their own joint.

(Continued)

On occasion, Steve would share his cannabis with friends, happy in the knowledge that this favour would be returned:

I would role a joint, smoke half and give rest to friend. If there are more (than two friends): everybody gets 2 spliffs, passes it around to share evenly. I know I would get back the same.

Summary

Nearly all (93 per cent) reported cannabis to be 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to get hold of, with 79 per cent stating that they could obtain it in less than an hour. 'Chipping-in' and sharing cannabis with friends was a common way of purchasing cannabis for 70 per cent of the sample, although it was a method used by just 19 per cent 'all' or 'most' of the time. Chipping-in was a mostly spontaneous and social event.

The sharing of cannabis was also common, with 78 per cent reporting that they shared cannabis with friends and that 25 per cent had done so in the few days preceding the interview. On average, the respondents reported sharing five to six times in the month before interview. Again, the sharing of cannabis was reported as being part of a meaningful social act.

Twenty-three per cent of the sample (41) never bought cannabis themselves, relying on friends to give them some, with a further 16 per cent (29) only accessing cannabis through friends buying on their behalf.

The importance of the social network to young people's cannabis transactions came through very strongly. Only 6 per cent reported buying cannabis from an unknown seller.

Sellers were described as ‘very good friends’ (often preceding cannabis transactions) or ‘a friend’. Twenty-one per cent bought from an ‘acquaintance’ – including people known from school and/or friend of friends. Seven bought from a family friend and three from a family member. The average age of sellers was 19 and they were usually around three years older than those they sold to.

The Independent Review (Police Foundation, 2000), while acknowledging the existence of social supply among friends

(sharing, buying for others, chipping-in are all interpreted as supply in current legislation) did so with little evidence about the extent to which this was common among young people. Our study shows that the use of and access to cannabis for young people revolves around the kind of social networking and social activities that the Independent Review argued justified a separation of penalties – as distinct from those against ‘proper dealers’.

4 Young people as suppliers of cannabis

In this chapter, we describe the extent and nature of young people’s involvement in the supply of cannabis. We look at the type of transactions young people were involved with and their motivations for selling.

Young people’s involvement in cannabis transactions

We asked respondents whether they had ever sold or brokered access to cannabis. Selling was defined as exchanging cannabis for goods or money, and brokering as helping others access cannabis without making a profit.¹ The extent to which young people were involved in cannabis transactions is summarised in Table 7. It shows that just over half (55 per cent) our respondents reported no involvement in brokering access to or selling cannabis. Of those who had been involved in supplying ($n=82$), almost half (37) had brokered access, and 45 reported selling cannabis. Of the sellers, half (22) had only done so on one or two occasions. Some of those that sold cannabis (8) also brokered access.

In the interviews, it became clear cannabis selling was carried out in a variety of ways.

To capture these data, we decided to create typologies of young people’s involvement in selling cannabis. Typologies were created according to the amount sold per week and the duration of time involved in selling. We developed the following categories:

- *Infrequent sellers:* These were sellers who had only ever sold once or twice.
- *Light sellers:* These were sellers who sold small amounts or had sold for only a short period of time.
- *Moderate sellers:* These were sellers who had sold amounts between ¼ oz and 2 oz over a period of at least six months.
- *Heavy sellers:* These were sellers who sold amounts of over 3 oz.

Table 7 provides an overview of gender, location, and age of initiation into cannabis selling depending on level of involvement in cannabis selling.

Greater numbers of male respondents were involved in cannabis transactions at all levels, particularly as moderate and light sellers. When female respondents reported involvement, it

Table 7 Involvement in cannabis transactions by gender and location

Level of involvement	Sample involvement <i>n</i>	Gender		Location		Average age at first involvement in cannabis transactions
		Male Number (%)	Female Number (%)	Rural Number (%)	Urban Number (%)	
Brokering	37	26	11	31	6	14.6
Infrequent selling	22	15	7	12	10	14.3
Light selling	8	7	1	6	2	15.2
Moderate selling	12	12	0	3	9	14.4
Heavy selling	3	2	1	0	3	13.7
Total	82	62	20	52	30	14.5

tended to be as 'light' sellers (brokering and selling infrequently). Brokering was much more common in our South-West sites, whereas two of the three heavy sellers were from the urban areas. The average age at first involvement in cannabis transactions ranged from 13 to 15 years.

Young people's understanding of what a drug dealer is

We asked respondents involved in selling or brokering of cannabis whether they saw themselves as 'drug dealers'. Two out of the three heavily involved sellers did so, and half of the 12 moderately involved sellers. Only minorities of the rest did.

The majority clearly distanced themselves from the description of a drug dealer. They saw a drug dealer as someone who sold a considerable quantity of cannabis to a sizeable customer base, making a significant profit.

Sixty-six of those involved in brokering or selling cannabis could say how much cannabis they usually carried on them at any one time. Eleven, of whom six were brokers, said that they never carried cannabis on them. Over half (33) stated they carried less than an eighth of an ounce, and 12 said that they carried up to a quarter of an ounce. Ten – who tended to be moderately involved in selling – carried larger amounts. However, the three most heavily involved in selling never carried more than half an ounce on them at any one time.

The more heavily involved in selling they were, the more sophisticated they were about strategies for avoiding arrest for possession with intent to supply. This raises the possibility, of course, that the less experienced sellers might

be more at risk of being swept into the criminal justice process.

Brokers

Thirty-seven young people (or 20 per cent of the whole sample) reported brokering access to cannabis for others. The average age of this group was 16 years (range 14–18), most were male (26). The majority (31) lived in the rural sites, with only six living in London. Nearly all (32) reported that their brokering was an essentially altruistic activity 'to help out friends', as the following quotes illustrate:

My friend couldn't get some, so I went and got him some. I still do it sometimes, if someone wants me to get it.

[I do it] just as a ..., some don't smoke often and they wanted it for a party or something. A lot of people don't like making contact with dealers.

Just under half of those involved in brokering (16) had helped others gain access to cannabis on only a few occasions and were currently only brokering for one person or were no longer involved in brokering. Two had been brokers for a period of up to six months, eight for up to a year and three for more than a year. Of the 16 current brokers, ten were acting on behalf of one to three people. Only two reported that they brokered for a greater number of people (18 and 20 people). Brokers in London were inclined to broker to fewer people than those in the South-West. Nearly all respondents (34) said they brokered for friends, while three reported brokering for acquaintances or a mixture of friends and acquaintances.

At the time of the interview, 22 brokers

stated that they were still brokering or that they would do it again. The main reason given was to help out friends. Eleven said they had stopped, for a variety of reasons including not wanting to get caught by police or parents, not wanting further involvement, or feeling it was not the right thing to do.

Case-study 4 Getting cannabis as a favour for friends

Chris was a 15-year-old from the South-West. He lived with his mother who worked as an administrator. Chris had been temporarily excluded from school for using threatening behaviour towards a teacher, but he was now back at school. He first tried cannabis at the age of 13 and, until a month before the interview, had been using skunk on a weekly basis. At the time of the interview, he had not used cannabis for a month.

Chris first brokered access to cannabis for a friend when he was 14. This was primarily for altruistic reasons as his friend did not know any cannabis suppliers.

(I) did it for a good friend. Helping him out because he didn't know a dealer.

In the year prior to interview Chris had brokered 'a few times', accessing cannabis for six friends in total. All these friends were the same age as Chris and from his locality. Friends usually telephoned Chris to ask if he could buy their cannabis for them. Chris bought £10-worth of cannabis

(Continued)

(a tenth) for his friends, and sometimes got 'a bit of weed' in return.

Chris said that he had stopped brokering, although, if asked, he would do it again to help out a friend. Chris did not see himself as a drug dealer because he has never actually sold cannabis for profit.

Sellers

Below we describe the types of sellers in our sample and the extent of their involvement in cannabis transactions/selling.

Infrequent sellers

Twenty-two young people (12 per cent) said that they had sold cannabis just once or twice. The average age of this group was 16 years (range 13–19); two-thirds (15) were male.

Eight respondents said that they sold to make a bit of money (8) or help out a friend (6). Four reported that they had previously sold because they had an excess of cannabis which they were not going to use themselves. Another young person explained that he had done a favour for a friend by selling cannabis on. One said that he had sold just for the fun. For this group, selling appeared to be a response to presented opportunities. However, nearly half said that their only motive was to help their friends out. More than half (14) said they had sold only to friends, while another six stated that they had sold to a mix of friends and acquaintances. None had sold to a stranger.

At the time of interview, the majority (16) were no longer involved in selling cannabis. Nearly a third (6), however, said that they would,

if the opportunity arose, sell cannabis again. For those who did not intend sell again (10), reasons given included not wanting to get caught (4) and not wanting to put the effort in that they thought selling required (4). Two respondents wanted to concentrate on their education and future careers rather than selling cannabis.

Case study 5 Selling once or twice to very good friends

At the time of interview, James was 15 years old and attending school. He had never been excluded from school or caught selling or possessing cannabis by the police. Both his parents were teachers, and he lived with his mother. James had first used cannabis at the age of 10, when he was introduced to it by a group of friends. His consumption had increased at the age of 13 when his father had moved out.

James described himself as having 'a short temper and mood swings'. He believed cannabis helped him to regulate these emotional ups and downs and to forget about personal problems. At the time of interview, he was using cannabis on a daily basis, buying around an eighth and a tenth each week. He had started to broker access to cannabis at the age of 14, helping out friends who did not know a seller. Since then, he had sold cannabis to his best friend a couple of times, as the following quote explains:

I had half an ounce and sold £10 worth to my best friend [who asked for some]. I got a bit of cannabis for it.

(Continued)

James said that he had only sold cannabis a few times and did not do it regularly as he was scared of being caught by the police. However, he said he would sell cannabis again but only to a good friend as a favour.

'Light' sellers

Nearly half the light sellers (3) sold less than an eighth of an ounce and had done so for a period between a couple of weeks and two years; another five were selling about an ounce between several weeks and a couple of months. The average age of the light sellers was 16 years (range 14–19). Their average age of first cannabis use was 13 years. All but one were male (7).

Most (5) reported that they were selling cannabis to make money. However, for most of this group, the profit made was often dependent on their social networks. The following quote is illustrative of this:

[I started selling] to try and make some money. I made a little £2ish profit. [I also started] to sort out friends when they want some and can't get it.

On average, young people from this group were selling to five people (range 2–15).²

The most common way of selling was to be contacted by telephone and to arrange a place to meet (8). All sold locally. Respondents described the people they sold to as friends (7) or friends and acquaintances (1) and of mixed ages. The fact that these young people sold to a varied age group may indicate that their friendship networks were more diverse than those who sold once or twice or infrequently.

Only one of the eight light sellers was still selling at the time of interview. Reasons for stopping were varied. Unsurprisingly, three respondents had stopped selling because they were worried about getting caught, and three because they felt it was too much of an inconvenience or because they were afraid of becoming too involved.

Case study 6 Selling to help out friends and for a small profit

At the time of interview Katie was 16 years old, lived with both her parents, and attended college. She had previously been temporarily excluded from school for truancy but never had been caught in possession of or selling cannabis at school or by the police. Katie had been introduced to cannabis through friends at the age of 12. By 16, she was using around an eighth of cannabis per week. Katie said that she mainly used it to relax. Katie originally bought from a male friend and started to sell to others as some of her friends 'don't know dealers and get scared, they ask you to buy on their behalf'. Despite helping out friends, she also wanted to make a bit of money. Katie sold up to an eighth of cannabis per week and had done so since she was 14. At the time of the interview, Katie was not selling to anyone, but said she would if she needed the money.

Case study 7 From brokering to selling for profit

At the time of interview, David was 16 years old and lived in the South-West with his parents. He started using cannabis at the age of 14 with friends. Since starting to use, his consumption had steadily increased. By the time of the interview, he was using three eighths and a tenth per week. He purchased cannabis either from friends he had known for a long time or from a particular place in his town which was known as a place to buy cannabis. He had started brokering at the age of 15. As a consequence, he got to know a number of sellers, where to get better deals and different qualities of cannabis. This led to David supplying about 20 friends a week a total of up to an ounce per week. David bought an ounce for around £125, sold five eighths of this ounce to friends for £125, leaving himself either three free eighths or £75 profit if he sold the three eighths. David had been caught in possession of cannabis by the police once when he was out with some friends on a Friday night:

They [the police] walked up to me on a Friday night, downtown. They spoke to us. They said that they smelled something and searched me. They found £4 worth and gave me a caution. They took the cannabis. It was called personal use.

After this event David stopped selling and said that he did not intend to start again as he was scared of getting into trouble with

(Continued)

other dealers and of being caught again by the police:

If you do too much people tell wrong people. It could mean that dealers come after you if you ruin their prices or that the police could find out about it.

Moderate sellers

We interviewed 12 young men who were moderate cannabis sellers. On average, they were 16 years old at the time of interview; this ranged from 15 to 17. This group had been selling between a quarter of an ounce and two ounces for a period of at least six months up to two years. Nine lived in London, three in the South-West.

Their average age at first cannabis use was 13 (range 10–15 years). All were regular cannabis users themselves, five of whom reported using every day. Most of this group started to sell cannabis a year after they had first used it (14). All but one were motivated by money, the remaining seller said that he sold to help out friends. Four also said that they sold to afford their own use. This ‘moderately involved’ group sold to an average of 16 people (range 13–30). In contrast to those with lighter levels of involvement, moderate sellers sold to both friends and acquaintances. Six of the twelve said they earned between £50 and £100 a week. Three earned less and one earned up to £200. Only two respondents – both from London – grew cannabis themselves for resale.

Moderate sellers, like other selling groups, tended to sell cannabis by buyers phoning up, placing their order and agreeing a convenient place to exchange money and drugs. Most sold only locally. Most reported that they bought a couple of ounces a week and sold this amount as smaller weights, thus maximising their profit. As the following quotes illustrate:

I bought around 2 ounces. I broke it down into £10 and £20 amounts. £10 was 1.3 to 1.5 grams. I consistently sold that amount each week.

I gradually build up. I start with £30. It gets you a quarter. I sell that in five £10 bags. I make £20 profit. Then I would get half an ounce for £60 and so on.

It is worth highlighting that six of the 12 sellers in this group had stopped selling at the time of interview and only one reported that he would consider returning to selling.³ Four respondents had given up owing to the effort they had to invest in selling, and two because they did not consider selling to be profitable enough. The six that were still involved in selling cannabis reported that they continued to do so to make money and to pay for their own use. None reported that they sold to help out friends, confirming that this group viewed selling quite differently from those that sold infrequently or small quantities. Three of the moderate sellers also reported selling drugs such as ecstasy (2), heroin (1) and crack (1).

Case study 8 'I thought I could smoke and sell at the same time'

George was 16, living at home with his mother and attending school. He had been temporarily excluded from school on several occasions, usually for fighting. He started to use cannabis at 14. He had used cannabis on a daily basis but was now cutting down because of the harm he thought it was doing to his education.

It [smoking cannabis] makes me lazy. I wasn't getting my work done.

George described how his motives for using cannabis had changed over time. When he started to use, he did so mainly to forget about personal problems and because of stress. More recently, however, he used it to help relax. He started to sell at 15, as he had liked the idea of the money he could earn:

I thought I could smoke and sell at the same time and make money. It seemed a good idea.

Since starting to sell, he had sold to about 30 friends and acquaintances within his locality. Generally, he bought an ounce per week and broke it down into £10 bags. At the time of the interview, George was still selling as 'I do like the money'. He earned at least £50 a week. When asked if he would call himself a dealer, George clearly distanced himself from this, highlighting that cannabis was not a proper drug:

I don't like the sound of 'a drug dealer'. I don't really see weed as a drug-drug. It's not like skunk.

Many (8) also reported that other family members were cannabis users. This may indicate that family involvement in cannabis use might increase the risk of becoming involved in selling. This may be due either to the normalisation of cannabis use in the immediate environment and a consequent lessening of normative barriers to this kind of deviance or other so far unexplored factors.

Heavy sellers

The three respondents that sold considerable amounts all came from London. Two of the three were male; all were living at home and attending college. All three had started to sell at the age of 13 or 14 years and had been selling about three ounces a week for between eight months and two years. All three started to sell to make money. At the time of interview, none was still selling. None had ever tried other drugs or been arrested for supplying cannabis, although two had been permanently excluded from school for disruptive behaviour.

Case study 9 Selling for friends as a good way to make money

Ben was 16, and had been introduced to cannabis by his brother. He had been smoking for three years, now doing so on a daily basis. He spent around £50 per week on cannabis which he bought from his cousin. Ben smoked because he believed cannabis 'slows down my nervous system and helps me sleep'. Ben soon started to sell cannabis for his cousin to pay for his own use and other needs.

(Continued)

Ben was selling about three ounces per week and had a weekly income of about £350. He sold to about 30 friends in the local area only accepting cash and never giving credit. After a year, however, Ben decided to stop. He could not really explain why he had stopped other than to say, 'I just wanted to'. Ben did not consider himself a drug dealer as the following quote shows:

No. I never saw myself in that way [as a drug dealer]. I never really was drug dealing. I was just passing it on.

Ben did not see his selling as problematic or deviant and regarded selling to friends as qualitatively different from dealing, perhaps because he had grown up around cannabis users. Ben also said that he had not taken cannabis into school or used it on school premises, nor had he been caught by the police for possessing or selling cannabis, thus confirming his self-image as something other than a dealer.

Case study 10 Selling has positive and negative aspects

Sue was 15 years old and lived with her disabled mother. She started to use cannabis to 'get things off my mind' at the age of 12. Since then, she had been using cannabis two or three times a week, spending around £50 a week. At the age of 14, Sue started to sell between two and

(Continued)

three ounces per week for an eight month period, on a commercial basis. Until she retired, Sue had been earning about £150 a week. The following quote gives an insight into her selling routine:

I used to get 50 odd bags out of 2 ounces and a quarter. I was selling it in £10 bags – used to put 1.6 grams in a bag, that's standard. It went up to 4½ ounces but never went further than that. I used to get it off people who sold in big bits.

She only sold locally to a mix of some 35 friends and acquaintances of her own age. Sue bought her supply of cannabis from somebody she described as a very close friend with whom she had grown up. After eight months of selling cannabis, Sue decided to stop. Asked why, she said:

It is not the right way of life. I made enough money, I made £3,700. I was happy.

Sue was very clear that, while she was selling, she was a drug dealer:

Yes, there's nothing else to call it. I wouldn't take it up again. I can't be bothered. It is too much hassle. It takes up all your time. People ringing you up in the middle of the night asking for weed.

In contrast to the other two heavily involved sellers, Sue had not been excluded from school. However, Sue had been caught smoking on school premises by a teacher who took no further action.

Case study 11 The businessman

At the time of interview, Charlie was 16 years old, and had been using cannabis daily for four years. He started selling cannabis at the age of 14 and tended to sell over three ounces a week. Charlie started to sell cannabis because a friend had asked him to buy some for him:

Someone asked me for some [cannabis]. I got it – got a big bit for free and carried on.

Like Ben, Charlie sold to around 30 people in his local area whom he described as both friends and acquaintances. Charlie bought about £1,000-worth of cannabis a week and sold this amount for £1,900. After selling for two years, Charlie decided to stop because, he claimed, there was ‘no more good stuff around’.

Charlie had been caught smoking cannabis by the police when he was 15. The police took his cannabis off him and decided to take no further action. In addition, Charlie had also been caught smoking at school. This resulted in a permanent exclusion and Charlie having to change school.

Unlike Ben, Charlie was happy to be labelled a ‘drug dealer’ although, in his opinion, he felt this term needed to be modified:

I see myself as a businessman. You can call people who sell cannabis as drug dealers, but you can also call them people who work.

Summary

Forty-five per cent of our sample reported some involvement in cannabis transactions. Of these, 37 had brokered access, and 22 had sold on only one or two occasions. Thirteen per cent stated that they had been involved in selling cannabis more than once or twice. Only two of the 23 respondents were female. Interestingly, there were differences in the level of involvement between respondents from the South-West and those from London. London respondents were generally more involved in selling than their rural counterparts were.

Those who had experience of selling cannabis had generally used cannabis more regularly than the rest of the sample. Three-quarters (18) of those involved in more frequent selling were everyday users or used cannabis two to three times a week.

Generally, those involved in cannabis transactions, particularly those brokering or who had sold once or twice only, did not perceive themselves as dealers. However, many of these individuals conceded that they could be ‘seen’ as dealers by others and by the criminal justice system.

5 School and police responses to young people's cannabis use

In this chapter, we describe young people's experiences of cannabis at school or college. We examine contact the respondents had with the police relating to cannabis and their understanding of the law on cannabis. The final sections of the chapter focus on how educational establishments respond to incidents involving young people and cannabis.

Table 8 shows the number of respondents that have been found in possession by either the police or their school. Half of those found in possession by the police had no experience of either brokering access to or selling cannabis. Of those involved in a drug-related incident in school (16), twelve disclosed that they had either brokered access to or sold cannabis.

Experience of cannabis in school or college

As discussed in Chapter 1, there has been considerable media debate about the prevalence of drug and alcohol use among young people in educational establishments and the potential consequences this use may have on a pupil's educational attainment and discipline.

Eighty-five of the overall sample of 182 reported that they were aware of either a seller or a broker at their school or college. The general picture to emerge was that brokers and sellers were predominantly male (60), of a similar age to the respondent (26) or older (25) and sold only cannabis (49). Seventy-nine respondents said they knew of someone at their school or college who had been caught in possession or selling/brokering cannabis. Interestingly, there was a marked difference between the two areas; 53 were aware of someone being caught in the rural sites compared with 26 in the London sites. The majority (58) stated that these were possession incidents, while 11 described supply or brokering incidents, and 10 were unsure.

Young people were asked about their experience of cannabis whilst at school or college. Fifty per cent (91) of the sample said that they had taken cannabis into school or college. Forty three per cent (78) said they had used cannabis whilst on school or college premises. At a later stage of the fieldwork we added questions about the frequency that young

Table 8 Coming to official attention for cannabis offences

Level of involvement in selling	Number	Found in possession by police	Caught in school for		
			Possession	Selling	Brokering
No involvement	100	15	4	0	0
Brokering	37	9	5	0	0
Infrequent selling	22	2	0	0	1
Light selling	8	1	2	0	0
Moderate selling	12	5	1	1	0
Heavy selling	3	1	2	0	0
Total sample no.	182	33	14	1	1

people who did take cannabis into school did so. Of the thirty-seven young people that said they had taken cannabis into school or college in the six months prior to interview only eight disclosed they had done so in the week prior to interview, three having done so on the day of interview. Just under half (18) said they no longer took cannabis into school or college. Taking cannabis to school or college appeared, for 19 of our sample, to be, or had been, a regular occurrence. Four said they took cannabis to school daily, whilst the others regularly took it in two or three times (7) or once a week (8).

Many of the young people we interviewed had been excluded from school. Two of the heavy sellers had been permanently excluded, although neither for a cannabis-related incident.

Respondents were asked if they had been caught with cannabis while at school or college. Sixteen young people disclosed that they had, with one having been caught brokering access and another selling. A further eight young people stated that, although they had never been physically caught with the drug, teaching staff had noticed that they were either under the influence or smelled, of the drug. Of this group (24), all but two said that this had only happened to them once, although one young person stated they had been caught smelling of cannabis five times, while another had been caught under the influence twice. The following quotes are illustrative examples of how young people were caught with cannabis on school or college premises.

[I] got caught lean [high] once in year ten. I was going to class and saw my head of year. He said I smelt of weed.

[It was the] end of [the] school year: [I] took beer and weed into school to chill out. Got caught drinking and smoking on [the] playing field.

Those caught in possession or under the influence described how a teacher (16), sometimes their head teacher (9), became involved in the incident. Six respondents mentioned that their parents were notified; four mentioned that the police became involved.

Responses to these incidents varied, and there appeared to be no real consistency between schools. Of those caught in possession (14), five received a fixed-term exclusion, two were permanently excluded, two received detention, and three had no action taken against them. The respondent found brokering cannabis had no action taken against them, and the one interviewee caught selling received a fixed-term exclusion and drug counselling. Other responses included drug counselling or support from the school's pastoral system (2), a warning (1) or a letter was sent to their parents regarding their behaviour (2). Those found under the influence or smelling of cannabis (8) received a fixed-term exclusion (3), were sent home (1) from school or no action was taken against them (4).

When asked what impact being found in possession had had on them, ten said it had no impact, but three felt it had impacted negatively on their school life; a further two feared it could harm their future career prospects. The following quotes are illustrative.

[It] disrupted [my] education. Teachers don't like me now, [they] used to like me. Every time she sees me [teacher] she gives me the evils.

[It] might not help me to get very far in [the] future ... Employers will be able to see [my] record.

Interestingly, one young person described being caught as a positive experience owing to the attention she received from fellow pupils:

Everyone in school was like 'you got caught smoking', everyone thought it was exciting.

Police and young people

Thirty-three respondents reported that they had been found in possession of cannabis by the police, most of whom (20) were from the London sites. The majority (25) were male, and nearly all had been caught once (16) or twice (13), although the remaining respondents had been caught either three (3) or four times (1). The young people were dealt with by the police in a variety of ways. Five said they were arrested and charged with possession, while a further eight said they were arrested and given a reprimand. Six said no further action (NFA) was taken. One young person said he was given community service, while a further two said they were given cannabis warnings by officers on the street. One young person was unsure what had happened to him. Interestingly, ten of the young people said their possession offence was dealt with informally by the police, the majority (8) of these being from the London sites. This finding is consistent with previous research on the policing of cannabis (May *et al.*, 2002, 2007). When asked whether being found in possession by the police had any effect on them, 13 stated that it had not. However, four felt it had affected their career prospects. Other effects mentioned by respondents included:

being more wary of the police (2); anger from family (1); and disruption to their social life (2). None of our respondents had been arrested for supplying cannabis.

Young people's understanding of the law

Since cannabis was reclassified in 2004, concern has consistently been raised about young people's understanding of these changes. In our sample, 57 per cent (103) were able to identify correctly that cannabis is now a Class C drug. We asked respondents to explain how they would expect to be treated if they were caught selling cannabis. The vast majority (155) correctly said they would be arrested. When discussing possible sanctions, 44 per cent (73) thought a custodial sentence was a possibility, while 26 believed they could be fined. Surprisingly, 24 believed they would receive a warning. Other options such as a caution (13), a reprimand (5) or a supervision order or community service (17) were also mentioned. To establish whether respondents viewed social supply in the same light as commercial supply, we asked whether they thought they would face the same sanctions if they were caught obtaining cannabis for their friends. Seventy-six per cent (139) thought they would be treated the same, while 32 respondents thought they would not; ten did not know. Of those who felt they would be treated the same, 101 stated it was because they considered it to be the same offence, as the following quotes illustrate.

[It's the] same as dealing. If you're given the money to get it and you are caught, it's just like you selling it to them yourself.

[You'd be] treated the same. Just because it's still supplying, you are getting it for another person.

Even if you buy it for your grandma you can still get caught for it. [It's] all the same.

Among those who thought social supply would not be treated in the same way as other supply (32), eleven thought this was because they were only sharing with friends and were not selling to them. Eight mentioned that, if they did get caught, they would merely claim that the cannabis was for their own personal use. The following quotes are illustrative.

I don't think I'd be treated as a seller because I'm not really selling it to them.

If it's just a £10 bag, you'd just say it was for personal use. [There's] not enough evidence to say it was supply.

Fifty-six per cent (102) of respondents thought that cannabis should be legalised; 31 per cent (57) of respondents were opposed to the idea, and the rest were uncertain. Reasons given for legalising cannabis included medical and therapeutic use (22), that cannabis was no worse than alcohol or cigarettes (22), and that it calms people down (17). A further 20 respondents stated it should be legalised but restrictions should apply in terms of age or quantity purchased. Reasons given against legalisation included the negative impact cannabis has on mental (25) and physical (11) health, and that legalisation has the potential to increase the number of users (14).

School policies

A number of policy documents have been published to help schools and colleges devise and implement procedures for dealing with the management of drugs on their premises (DfES 2004; DrugScope/ Alcohol Concern 2004; ACPO 2006). Such policies are seen as playing a central role in the delivery of the government's drug strategy for young people and, as a result, it is expected that all educational institutions should have their own policy, based on government guidance documents (DfES 2004). Research conducted in a sample of schools showed that 98 per cent had a written policy on managing drug-related incidents on school premises (NCSR/NFER 2006).

As part of the research, we were interested in assessing the potential impact on young people of coming to official attention for cannabis offences. In total, 75 secondary schools, independent schools and FE colleges were identified within the seven research sites. We contacted each of them during the spring/ summer of 2006 and requested a copy of their policy on managing drug incidents. In total, 41 institutions sent us their policy; all but three of them were from the London sites. Some schools had developed and shared a policy with other schools.¹ Only two schools (one secondary, one independent) stated they did not have a written policy on managing drug incidents on their premises. Unfortunately, we were unable to find out the reasons why the remaining schools did not send us a copy of their drug policy. It may have been due to administrative or time constraints at an individual school level; however, it is also possible that these schools were either reluctant to have their policy scrutinised or that they simply did not have one.

We review the policies using the four following main themes:

- formulation, review and dissemination of school policies;
- management of an incident;
- role of the police;
- response to an incident.

Formulation, review and dissemination of policies

Twenty of the 36 policies we received had been reviewed in the previous two years, as recommended in the DfES guidance. Four had not been updated since 2002, and it was unclear when the remaining twelve policies had last been revised. Most documents (29) gave a definition of what the school or college deemed to be a 'drug'; 26 included tobacco and alcohol within their definition.

It could be argued that for schools and colleges to have a robust drug policy, those who could be potentially affected by the policy need to be aware of, and have access to, it. Only nine institutions gave information on how their policy was disseminated and to whom. Six mentioned that they informed pupils about the policy through a pupil handbook (4), school prospectus or a pupil forum. Only four schools and colleges mentioned how parents could obtain information about their drug policy, either through the school prospectus or by sending a copy of the policy to parents.

Key players in the development of policies included the senior management team (17), school governors (12) and the school's drug policy co-ordinator (7). Only a third of policies appeared to have been developed in

consultation with either pupils (11) or parents (10). Other agencies that were consulted in the formulation of policies included the police (3), the Drug Action Team (DAT) (2) and the local council's school drug adviser (3). This appears to correspond with research by the Drugs Education Forum (2005), who found that school drug policies appeared to remain the domain of the school's senior management team and that there appeared to be little real consultation with parents, pupils, governors or other teaching staff.

Management of a drug incident

Thirty policies explained the chain of communication when dealing with an incident. Typically, if a member of staff discovers an incident or suspects a pupil is in possession of, or supplying, a drug, they are expected to inform the senior management team directly or a head of year, who will then decide on what course of action to take. Twenty-four policies had clear guidelines on how an incident should be managed, which was often illustrated by a flow chart, bullet points or hypothetical scenarios. NCSR/NFER (2006) research found that 92 per cent of schools said they would contact a pupil's parents if they found a pupil in possession or taking drugs; however, only 28 (78 per cent) of our sample stated this intention in their policy.

Some policies were unclear about issues such as the geographical area covered and whether it was appropriate to search a pupil for drugs. Only 22 policies detailed where and when their arrangements applied. Fourteen policies were unclear or did not stipulate the geographical boundaries of where their policy extended to. Fifteen schools stated that their policy extended

to school visits and residential trips, while eight schools included travel to and from school.

The DfES and ACPO guidance clearly states that members of staff can search school property, such as pupil's lockers. Members of staff cannot, however, carry out personal searches on pupils suspected of concealing drugs on their person. Only twelve schools and colleges referred to this, eleven of which repeated the information in the guidance. Perhaps worryingly, one policy incorrectly stated that staff are able to search a pupil.

Role of the police

Both DfES and ACPO guidance mention that all school policies should include a section on the police's involvement in drug incidents. Schools and colleges are under no legal obligation to inform the police of incidents, and they have no legal requirement to disclose the name of a pupil involved. Schools and colleges are, however, advised to liaise closely with their local police or Safer Schools Partnership officer.

The majority (31) of the policy documents described the role they expect the police to play in an incident. Twenty-four stated that they would review the circumstances of the incident before deciding whether to involve the police, and seven said they would actively consult with the police on how to deal with each incident on a case by case basis. Interestingly research completed by NCSR/NFER (2006) found that 70 per cent of schools in their sample would contact the police if a pupil was found taking drugs.

Both DfES and ACPO guidance suggests that, when an illegal substance is found, it should be the police that dispose of the drug. Only ten of the policies we reviewed stated

that they would contact the police to arrange collection and disposal of the confiscated drug. However, two schools said they would dispose of the substances themselves on condition this was carried out by two members of staff. Twelve policies said police involvement would depend on the incident: for example, the police would be likely to be called if a pupil refused to consent to being searched or if a pupil became violent during an incident.

Responding to a drug-related incident

The majority (28) of policies stated that each incident was dealt with on an individual basis. Eight gave additional information on what factors would be considered relevant when deciding on what course of action to take. Factors included the pupil's previous behaviour (7), the circumstances of the incident (4), the type (5) and quantity of the drug found (5), the role the pupil played in the incident (4) and whether it was possession or supply (4). Six schools and colleges mentioned dealing with all incidents in a uniform manner. Only one school disclosed that they operated a zero tolerance approach to dealing with drug-related incidents; in this case, students would be permanently excluded regardless of any extenuating circumstances.

Twenty-seven mentioned that individuals involved in drug incidents could face a fixed-period exclusion. Only three stipulated how long a period of exclusion would last, which was from three to five school days. Five schools mentioned that they would also consider placing pupils on an acceptable behaviour contract after their exclusion period had come to an end, while 20 institutions stated that students should receive some form of counselling

regarding the incident, either through the school or college pastoral system or through referral to an external agency, such as a young person's drug worker. Twenty-nine policies said the use of permanent exclusion was a potential response to an incident. Only six schools made the distinction between possession and supply incidents, five of which stated a pupil would be automatically excluded and a further three said exclusion would occur if a pupil was persistently found in possession of a drug.

Implementing school drug policies: actual responses

While school drug policies will tell us something about a school's broad intentions, it fails to outline how these policies are implemented. In the South-West, we interviewed the person responsible for responding to drug-related incidents in each community college. We also interviewed other key professionals, for example, Police School Liaison Officers, School Drug Advisors, Youth Intervention Officers and workers in Young People Services who also receive referrals from local schools. These interviews provided us with information on how drug-related incidents tend to be managed in schools and how guidelines are interpreted and implemented. It was decided that the circumscribed nature of the South-West area made it more suitable than the highly fragmented and dispersed London boroughs to provide case study material on how drug-related incidents can be dealt with in the 'real world'. Clearly, there will be many more issues than those presented here; however, the issues raised are, to a large degree, generic, reflecting the complexity of policy implementation.

Pragmatism vs principled responses

For two of the sites (A and B), we classed the response to drug-related incidents as pragmatic, where each individual incident is dealt with on its own merits and where the best interests of the child and school are sought to be served. In Site C, we believed the response was a principled one akin to a zero tolerance policy. Effectively, those involved in a drug-related incident would, by default, be permanently excluded.

Site A had five recorded drug-related incidents in the previous five years, which had resulted in 26 temporary exclusions for possession and two permanent exclusions for supply. Each incident tended to involve several young people, and all were cannabis related. Site B recorded 20 incidents in five years; however they came in 'peaks and troughs' (six in one particular term) and with repeat 'offenders' accounting for a number of the incidents. Not all incidents (e.g. a suspicion of possession) were found to be reliable, and no action was taken on these occasions following investigation. Four incidents were dealt with by temporary exclusion and two by fixed-term exclusion. Some incidents resulted in an area (such as the girls' toilet) being monitored, or students transferred to the Pupil Referral Unit and/or being referred to an appropriate agency external to the school. Again, cannabis was the sole drug involved. Site C reported having had no drug-related incidents over the previous five years, and largely put this down to a strong deterrent policy. However, during interviews with young people who attended this particular school, some reported that they had been temporarily excluded for a drugs-related incident. This was corroborated by professionals

in contact with (but not employed by) the school, who also reported numerous drug-related incidents at the school in recent years.

In-school procedures

Drug-related incidents in each of the schools were dealt with by either the head teacher (Site A) or deputy head teachers (B and C). Schools in Sites A and B reported having a policy strongly influenced by the DfES guidance and claimed that it had proved very helpful. Incidents often came to the attention of the school via other children but also if a young person was found intoxicated on school premises or in possession of a substance. When this happened, a team of individuals would investigate. Site A had a 'two-strike' policy for possession whereby permanent exclusion – rarely used – followed a second offence. Supply offences (when interpreted as such) resulted in permanent exclusion. In most cases, the police were not called. In Site B, the relationship with a long-standing police school liaison officer was considered particularly helpful. This did not, however, appear to lead to any greater criminal justice entanglement or differential outcomes for incidents than Site A. In Site A, the police school liaison officer had changed so often that police involvement had come to be seen as, ultimately, unhelpful. Similarly, Site B also reported that when their long-standing school liaison officer was on leave or unable to attend, the replacements were often less helpful than if no help had been tendered.

Both schools reported that, if the police were not involved, they were usually uninterested in collecting the cannabis, and it was commonly left to the individual school to do so. One school (Site A) had been told to 'flush it down the toilet'.

Searching young people for drugs when investigating an incident appears to cause considerable concern. Site A reported a number of ways of 'convincing' the young person that it was in their best interests to 'empty their pockets'. Persuasion of this kind might involve telling the young person that, if they co-operated, the police (or perhaps even their parents – but not usually) would not have to be involved whereas, if they did not co-operate, this course of action would be a possibility. Site B reported using more 'conventional' approaches and insinuated that, at times, a more 'forceful' approach to search had been used. Again, this appears to suggest that clear and specific guidance on procedures for searching need to be integrated into school policy.

Overall, the experience of the two schools that had open and transparent policies about dealing with incidents, and that were sensitive to young people's broader history and context, proved to be effective for both individual and school.

Young people's awareness of school responses

In our interviews with young cannabis users, we asked respondents whether they knew how their school or college would respond to a drug incident. Seventy-three per cent (124) stated they were aware of what their school would do. More South-West respondents (70) stated they were aware of their institution's policy than their London counterparts (54). When asked to elaborate on how the school or college might respond, 43 respondents thought they would use a fixed-term exclusion to tackle the incident. A greater number mentioned that

they would or could permanently exclude a pupil. A number of respondents differentiated between a possession and supply offence, with ten stating possession would result in a fixed-term exclusion, while supplying would lead to a permanent exclusion (18). Sixty-one respondents believed that their school or college would involve the police.

Summary

While half (91) of the young people that we interviewed had taken cannabis into school or college, and 43 per cent (78) said they had used cannabis while at school or college, only a minority of respondents did this on a regular basis. This appeared to be reflected in the small number of young people who reported having been caught under the influence of, in possession of, or selling/brokering, cannabis. There appeared to be no real consistency by schools on how to deal with drug incidents,

and nearly all young people who had been caught reported that the incident had not had an impact on them.

While 33 had been found in possession by the police, none had been caught selling the drug. The vast majority of the sample thought they would be arrested if they were caught selling cannabis, and over three-quarters of the young people felt there was no difference in sanctions between social and commercial supply.

Of the school policies we analysed, most included sections on how an incident is dealt with and when it is appropriate to involve the police. However, many policies were unclear on issues such as the appropriateness of searching pupils. Many policies were also lacking in any input from either pupils or parents, and it was not clear how widely these policies were disseminated.

6 Summary and conclusions

Young people's access to drugs has rarely been considered in UK research, and this report has offered a snapshot view of how young people in a large city and in rural villages get supplies of cannabis. The 182 young people interviewed for this study are unlikely to be representative of young people in general, as they were selected because they used cannabis and were recruited from particular settings such as Youth Centres and Youth Offending Teams. However, what they told us provides a good insight into the way in which young cannabis users acquire the drug. The key points that emerge are as follows.

- The average age at first cannabis use among respondents was 13. Many were first introduced to the drug by friends. Most used cannabis regularly, with two-thirds using at least once a week. They said they used cannabis because it helped them to relax, calm down, and it made them feel more sociable. Nearly all said they used cannabis with friends because it was fun and sociable. The average spend on cannabis per week was £20. Half the young people funded their use through money they received from parents or family. There was little experimentation with other drugs, although a fifth had tried some other type of drug, most commonly ecstasy.
- Nearly all reported cannabis to be 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to get hold of, with 79 per cent stating that they could obtain it in less than an hour. 'Chipping-in' and sharing cannabis with friends was a common way of purchasing the drug. Chipping-in was a mostly spontaneous and social event. Sharing cannabis with friends was a regular event; on average the respondents reported sharing five to six times in the month before interview.
- Twenty-three per cent of the sample never bought cannabis themselves, relying on friends to give them some, with a further 16 per cent only accessing cannabis through friends buying on their behalf. Social networks are key to understanding young people's access to cannabis. Only 6 per cent reported buying cannabis from an unknown seller. Cannabis sellers were described as very good friends, with many friendships pre-dating the use of cannabis. The average age of sellers was 19, usually three years older than their buyers.
- Nearly half (45 per cent) our sample reported some involvement in providing access to or selling cannabis – though, of these, only half had done so on more than a couple of occasions. London respondents were generally more involved in selling than their rural counterparts were. Generally, those involved in cannabis transactions did not perceive themselves as dealers, but many conceded that they could be seen as such by others and by the criminal justice system.
- Half the young people we interviewed had taken cannabis into school or college, and 43 per cent (78) said they had used cannabis while at school or college. However, only a minority of respondents did this on a regular basis. This was reflected in the small number of young people who had been caught under the influence of, in possession of, or selling/brokering, cannabis. There appeared to be no real consistency by

schools on how to deal with drug incidents, and nearly all young people who had been caught reported that the incident had had very little impact on them.

- Of the school policies we analysed, most included sections on how to deal with incidents and when to involve the police. However, many policies were unclear on issues such as the appropriateness of searching pupils. Many policies were also lacking in any input from either pupils or parents, and it was not clear how widely these policies were disseminated.
- While 18 per cent of our respondents had been found in possession by the police, none had been caught selling the drug. The vast majority thought they would be arrested if they were caught selling cannabis, and over three-quarters were aware there are no differences in law between offences involving social and commercial supply.

Our findings suggest that cannabis supply to young people, at least in the areas where the research was conducted, had little to do with commercial concerns. Young people's patterns of cannabis acquisition had little or nothing to do with 'drug markets' as they have been conventionally described, and were primarily based around friendship and social networks. Young people were introduced to cannabis by friends, accessed and maintained supplies via friends, as well as passed on and sold cannabis to friends.

Importantly, the cannabis supply mechanisms used by our respondents served to insulate or distance them from more overtly criminal drug markets. An argument often put

forward for the decriminalisation or legalisation of cannabis is that such reform would protect young cannabis users against exposure to more harmful patterns of drug use and criminality. For our sample, this 'market separation' appears to have been achieved naturally. Of course, we cannot assume that the situation is replicated throughout Britain, though our findings are consistent with other studies (NCSR/NFER, 2006).

The Independent Review (Police Foundation, 2000) recognised the existence of social supply among friends but was not in a position to judge how common it was. This report shows that young people's cannabis use revolves around the kind of social networking and social activities that the Independent Review argued justified a distinction in law between social and commercial supply.

We think that the Independent Review was right in principle, but our findings suggest that, in practice, current approaches to enforcement – whether through accident or design – manage to differentiate between social and commercial supply. Social supply rarely comes to official attention and, when it does, there is already sufficient discretion within the system to respond appropriately. Whether the law should be amended is a matter for fine political judgement. Few politicians who have launched initiatives for cannabis reform have emerged unscathed. However desirable a legal distinction may be, we think it improbable that any politician will in the present climate of drugs debate wish to be pilloried for 'putting the nation's children at risk'. However, there is a strong case for ensuring that there is clear guidance, for example from ACPO, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Youth Justice Board and

the DfES about the best ways of dealing with offences of social supply committed by young people. Such guidance might present realistic vignettes involving social, semi-social and commercial supply, and propose appropriate ways of handling each situation.

How far this guidance should go in proposing equivalence between offences of possession and social supply is obviously a judgement to be made by the issuing bodies. However, in our view, when a group of young people decides to buy cannabis and elects one of its members to handle the transaction, it makes no sense at all to regard the buyer as more culpable than those who tasked and funded the buyer. Shades of difference in culpability emerge if the buyer initiates the joint enterprise, and there are still bigger differences if, in such circumstances, the buyer profits from the transaction.

Many of our sample came into contact with cannabis at school – unsurprisingly, given the centrality of school in young people’s social lives, and the fact that a significant minority of young people use cannabis. However, the use of cannabis in school was a rare event. The school drugs policies we considered as part of this research were largely consistent with national guidance, with a few exceptions. However responses to cannabis incidents were less coherent. While individual circumstances of drug incidents will vary, we did not gather this level of detail for the current study, it seems that a wide variety of sanctions can apply, depending on which school you attend. Given the impact that permanent exclusion from school can have on a young person and their future prospects, this level of response seems disproportionate. The level of harm that is likely

to accrue to the individual excludee is likely to outweigh the harm caused by the social supply event. While it is important to retain some level of deterrent sanction, this must be balanced against the potential long-term impact on the individual. In our view those involved in the social supply of cannabis detected by schools should not receive a permanent exclusion.

For school policies on drugs to have some validity among pupils, it is important that pupils and parents are, first, aware that such documents exist and, secondly, that periodically, pupils and parents are consulted about the content of these policies and the views expressed by them considered. Finally, it is important that policies are sensitive to normative behaviour among young people rather than being based in unrealistic expectations of drug using and supplying behaviour.

At the time of writing, the government has asked its ACMD whether the classification of cannabis should be reversed to Class B. The findings of this study carry oblique implications for reclassification. As we have previously argued (May *et al.*, 2007), SOCAP 2005 removed the original rationale for reclassification to Class C – that it would make cannabis possession a non-arrestable offence. Under the new legislation, any offence is arrestable provided that the arrest is proportionate to the circumstances of the offence. As things turned out, the reclassification was introduced in a way that preserved the arrestability of the possession offence – until the SOCAP provisions removed the distinction. The only remaining criteria against which to assess the case for reversing the classification are (a) the risks posed by cannabis, relative to those of other illicit drugs

and (b) the declaratory impact of reversing the classification on users' behaviour.

It falls well beyond the remit of this report to assess the level of risk cannabis presents. That leaves the question of the declaratory impact of reverting to Class B. On the strength of the findings of this study, we very much doubt that a change would have any impact whatsoever on young people. We have seen how cannabis use

is significantly embedded in the social world of many young people, and a marginal change to the drug's legal status – following on the confusion of the last five years – will achieve very little. What is required is consistent, visible provision of accurate and accessible information about the health risks that cannabis use actually represents to young people.

Notes

Chapter 1

- 1 Since then, there have been reports, especially in London, of increasing large-scale cultivation by criminal gangs, e.g. *The Observer*, 2005.
- 2 The Police Federation is the national police organisation which represents the interests of officers below the rank of Superintendent.
- 3 A more detailed explanation of the policing of cannabis can be found in May *et al.* (2007).
- 4 Snowballing is a technique that refers to identifying new respondents who fit the research criteria through already existing networks and contacts.
- 5 Although the rates of exclusion may appear high, it reflects the demographic profile of participating YOTs and School Exclusion Units.
- 6 One is the most deprived area, and 354 is the least deprived area.

Chapter 2

- 1 For some questions, respondents were able to provide more than one answer. Where this is the case, total percentages will nearly always be more than 100 per cent.
- 2 Some of the answers clearly included expenditure on cannabis bought with resale in mind.

Chapter 3

- 1 Respondents were able to provide more than one response. The sum of percentages therefore exceeds 100 per cent.

- 2 A 'teenth' refers to 1/16th of an ounce. An eighth refers to 1/8th of an ounce.
- 3 We think it unlikely that this proportion bought and used strong-strain cannabis. We think it more likely that skunk was used as a generic term for domestically cultivated cannabis, or even – among the less informed – for herbal cannabis of any sort.
- 4 This was also a multiple response question. See note 1, chapter 2.

Chapter 4

- 1 Although some small 'reward' such as a 'bit of weed' for acting as broker may be received.
- 2 This, however, excludes two (outlier) cases where respondents referred to having sold to 50 and 200 people, respectively, albeit over a short period of time with no further or intended involvement in selling.
- 3 It is possible, of course, that some of this group had not in fact stopped selling, but were simply reluctant to admit at interview to quite serious involvement in dealing. Our impression is that they were being candid, however.

Chapter 5

- 1 Five schools in our sample used the same policy, while a further two schools also used the same policy. This means a total of 36 school policies were received.

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