



Public Health:  
Working together to improve the health  
and wellbeing of our communities

# **Edibles Facts, Risks & Harm Minimisation**

Guidance and Information to Support Professionals  
Working with Children and Young People

## What are edibles?

Edibles are foods containing cannabis. These foods can be homemade, such as brownies, cakes or bought items such as sweets, chocolate or gummies. Edibles have also been seen in drink format and is known as THC Lean.

Intelligence suggests that bought items are becoming more popular and can often go “undetected” as the packaging closely mirrors well-known brands such as Haribo or Nerds. The packaging of edibles deliberately targets young people and can present a risk of others consuming the items without knowing that they contain drugs.

THC is a psychoactive compound in cannabis and can make people feel a range of effects, while cannabidiol (CBD) is the non-psychoactive chemical compound which does not have the same effect. Any CBD product containing THC is illegal in the UK.

The sweet version are widely available on the internet and via social media and may be easily accessed by young people. There is NO quality control on these products.

## What are the risks?

Edibles may fall into the wrong hands and be consumed by people who believe they are innocent food items. This could be a particular risk to younger siblings of those who have purchased the items

It can be difficult to know the strength and exact contents of edibles purchased. Additionally, it is likely that the products may contain other chemicals than cannabis

The effect of consuming edibles takes longer than smoking cannabis. This can lead to young people thinking that it hasn't worked and consuming more which risks overdosing. In addition, the effects can be more intense and take longer to wear off.

There are many health risks, including<sup>1</sup>:

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Nausea
- Dry mouth
- Confusion and poor coordination
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations
- Panic attacks
- Impact on mental health
- Psychosis

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<sup>1</sup> [Cannabis | Weed | Effects of Cannabis | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](#)

Cannabis is illegal; there is a risk of young people becoming involved with the criminal justice system

- Maximum sentence for possession is 5 years, an unlimited fine, or both
- Maximum sentence for supplying cannabis, even to friends, is 14 years, an unlimited fine, or both <sup>1</sup>

## Exploitation and cannabis edibles

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Police are concerned about the growing link between county drugs lines and cannabis edibles. Children are not only being targeted as a new market but are also being enticed with seemingly legal confectionary as a means of recruiting them into their ranks as ‘clean skin’ couriers and dealers. ‘Clean skin’ refers to those who have no previous record and due to their age are more likely to go under the radar.

While the edibles may appear safe or fun, children may soon find themselves being exploited by the group, with the gangs using a range of grooming techniques to control the children and get them to carry out a wide criminal activity on their behalf. It is important that children who commit crime because of such exploitation are seen as victims and treated as such.

If you are aware of any activity, or are concerned about potential exploitation and/or county lines activity, please submit a multi-agency information sharing form to the police



Multi-Agency  
Information Submis:

## Campaign Background

### Increasing Use

The use of edibles by young people has been increasing and reports of harm have been seen both locally and nationally. As a result of information received about the use of edibles, the public health team have decided that it is important to raise awareness about the risks associated with these drugs, and to provide harm minimisation advice to young people locally.

### Public Health Campaign

Building on learning from a summer awareness campaign in 2021, Central Bedfordshire Council has joined forces with Bedford Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council and Luton Borough Council to target 14-18 year olds in the region with harm reduction messages. Young people spend a lot of time using social media websites, which provides opportunities for us to provide information to them.

During our summer campaign, our assets were viewed almost 990,000 times, and lead to 2,700 hits on the Central Bedfordshire Council website. We learned that our own website may not be the best source of information for young people and have decided to partner with [Talk to Frank](#) for the edibles campaign to provide a richer source of information.

We have worked to produce 2 videos, and some static images which will be used on SnapChat, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. These assets will be linked to the Talk to Frank website to provide further information for young people should they decide to click on the images.

## Our Assets

Two videos have been produced along with a series of static images. These will be used in on various social media websites during the campaign period

### Why do edibles hit you harder than smoking

- 1080 x 1080 (Instagram and facebook) video:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/0cyd8m2pn4kv61l4vpv0puhwg5l4rc2h>
- 1080 x 1080 (Instagram and facebook) carousel PNGS:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/5bibn7w6mgxostwwluwhe4hm9sq53sev>
- 1080 x 1920 (Stories and Snapchat) video:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/h7qhglygyexaatvqha5kjc96uqopwm2m>
- 1080 x 1920 (Stories and Snapchat) carousel PNGS:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/yhe4cv8egfm7ppeji7lmz0ep2bpg4dly>

### Easy to digest advice about edibles

- 1080 x 1080 (Instagram and facebook) video:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/sr25pnsgx94wz49lnuj9viju88bbpgxk>
- 1080 x 1080 (Instagram and facebook) carousel PNGS:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/xt74k5uuis8ul2d2b2f96al93enkiyu6>
- 1080 x 1920 (Stories and Snapchat) video:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/p4jagplt7xxsi6pdtlhh9h1evpdu2n5r>
- 1080 x 1920 (Stories and Snapchat) carousel PNGS:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/9dassfejlukj4vafx16fixzpi9dvgae9>

### YouTube version:

- Why do edibles hit you harder than smoking? <https://youtu.be/iTXHVztNjn4>
- Easy to digest advice about edibles: <https://youtu.be/0oNojgg8rqw>

### Twitter version:

- Why do edibles hit you harder than smoking?  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/rd9awwj5ewh0n3r1avwaf4pc4ctollno>
- Easy to digest advice about edibles:  
<https://centralbedfordshire.box.com/s/wpgk8yox35jvgwwgqpm2rt9mm5g4aiq6>

## Key Messages

**Harm:** edibles may appear innocent from their packaging but in reality they present a high risk for those who take them, and others who may accidentally consume them without knowing what they are. These products have no quality control process, and it is not possible to know exactly what substances and chemicals may be in them.

**Keeping safe:** while there are no risk-free options when it comes to drugs, there are things that young people can do to help stay safe if they choose to take drugs. Planning how to keep themselves, and others, safe is very important when it comes to edibles.

## Key Dates

The targeted campaign will run for 4 weeks from the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022

## Example messages

Messages to accompany “Why do edibles hit your harder than smoking assets’

- What are edibles? And why might they be more dangerous than you think? [Watch this short video/take a look at these quick slides] to find out. Alternatively, why not Talk to Frank? <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis>
- You might think that eating cannabis would be safer, but that’s not quite true. [Watch this short video/take a look at these quick slides] to find out why it can hit you harder than smoking. And if you’re looking for more advice, why not Talk to Frank? <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis>

Messages to accompany “Easy to digest advice about edibles”

- What do you know about edibles? Here’s some easy to digest advice to help you get informed and protect yourself. And if you’re after more advice, why not Talk to Frank? <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis>
- Cannabis is put in all sorts these days – from gummies to tea, lollies to yoghurt (yep, you heard right). Find out what edibles are and why they can be dangerous. And if you’re after more advice, why not Talk to Frank? <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/cannabis>

## Information to share with young people

Edibles look like normal sweets and imitate popular brands. To spot them, look at the packaging carefully. If you come across edibles, speak to an adult

If regularly used cannabis in any form can have a negative impact on your mental health, education and future employment

If you are worried about someone who may have taken edibles call an ambulance

Cannabis is a class B drug, the maximum prison sentence for possession is 5 years, an unlimited fine or both

Supplying someone even your friends, the maximum prison sentence is 14 years, an unlimited fine or both

If you are convicted of possession of an illicit drug many countries in the world such as the USA, Australia and New Zealand will not allow you a visa to visit.

## If young people choose to use edibles, there are some simple harm reduction messages that can be provided

- Always eat a small amount of any substance at first in case it is stronger than you are used to, or has had something dangerous added to it to `bulk it up`
- Use somewhere you feel safe and with people you trust
- Have someone you trust with you who will stay drug/alcohol free in case of emergency
- If you think someone has taken something and you are worried call an ambulance, don't leave them to sleep it off
- Remember these things may affect your experience when using edibles:
  - Your mental state, how you are feeling
  - The environment, where you are
  - Who you are with
  - What chemicals the substance has in it

## What can you do?

- Speak to young people about edibles so they are aware of these and the dangers of consuming them.
- Monitor food packaging/wrappers, looking for images of cannabis leaves or wording such as CBD or THC suggesting the items are cannabis oil infused.
- If you are made aware of any social media accounts advertising these items, please report this information to the police or crime stoppers
- Build a trusting relationship with young people that you are worried about. Has there been a sudden change in behaviour? Have they changed friendship groups or become less bothered about their appearance?

- If you believe that a young person may have consumed edibles and is experiencing a reaction, call an ambulance
- Ensure your school has a drug and alcohol policy in place to provide support to young people



FINAL BBC Drugs and Alcohol Policy (t

## Further information

- [Talk to Frank](#) – the government’s drug advice website/helpline (0300 1236600) including information and advice for parents on how to talk about drugs with their children
- [KOOH](#) – mental health support and advice for 11-19 year olds, available 365 days a year
- [Young Minds Parents Helpline](#) – 0808 802 5544 (Mon – Fri 9:30 -16.00)
- [SHOUT](#) – text SHOUT to 85258 24/7 free text service for anyone in crisis anywhere
- [PSHE Association](#) – drug and alcohol lesson plans for primary and secondary school children

## Signposting for children and young people affected by drugs (and/or alcohol)

In Central Bedfordshire / Bedford Borough, [Aquarius](#) provides support for young people aged 18 and under, to help them understand the risks and harm of taking drugs or drinking alcohol. Additionally, the team provide support for those who are affected by a family member’s use (e.g. parent, grandparent, sibling etc).

The referral process is straight forward, simply complete a referral form with the young person’s consent, and sent it to the team at: [ypbedfordshire@aquarius.org.uk](mailto:ypbedfordshire@aquarius.org.uk)



1. Aquarius Referral Form Jan 2021.doc



Public Health:  
Working together to improve the health  
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**Find us online:** [Drugs and alcohol · Bedford Borough Council](#)

**Call:** 0300 300 8309

**Email:** [lilli.peters@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lilli.peters@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

