

Developing a drug policy



Although it is not a legal requirement for pubs, clubs & festivals to have a drug policy, many licensing authorities and local police services consider them invaluable. Irrespective of whether a policy is required, the benefits of doing so are very clear:

- To demonstrate that the business is committed to safeguarding the welfare of its customers
- To ensure that the business operates within the law
- To help employers comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) by safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of employees
- To serve as a checklist to ensure all areas of concern are addressed
- To communicate the business' views to all staff, and ensure that everyone understands procedures and works to them

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a template to help organisations develop their drug policy. We do not provide a model drug policy for two reasons. First, each venue or organisation needs to develop a policy which is appropriate and relevant to itself, rather than adopting a generalised version (as you can imagine, a drug policy for a weekend festival would look very different to that for a small nightclub). Secondly, the process of developing a policy is as important as the policy itself – the process enables managers and key staff members to consider carefully particular issues of concern and the best ways of their business responding to them.

The template, which can be examined below or sets out a structure for, and the key elements of, a drug policy to enable businesses to organise their thinking.

Before turning to the template, it should be emphasised that a drug policy is only one part of the response to managing drug-related incidents. Staff need good information, training, supervision and support to implement any policy. A good policy also ensures a safe working environment for staff.

A drug policy should be seen as a working document, continuously being amended and improved in response to new developments in drug use or health and safety legislation. It should be formally reviewed on an annual basis. The involvement of police and licensing officers in the development of a drug policy can greatly enhance its worth and also contributes to the strengthening of working relationships.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

An introductory statement should set out the purpose and scope of the drug policy. Normally, there will be three main aims of the policy:

1. to prevent drug dealing at dance events run by the organisation whose policy it is;
2. to minimise drug use at those events; and
3. to safeguard customers attending who have used drugs.

STAFF AND THE DRUGS POLICY

Clearly a policy isn't worth the paper it's written on, if it's not implemented. The policy should clearly state how staff will be informed about the policy, provided with drug training and supervised and supported in the implementation of the policy. The policy should pay attention to the health and safety of staff as well as customers.

CUSTOMERS AND THE DRUGS POLICY

It is also vital to communicate the drugs policy to club-goers. The policy should set out how different practices and procedures in the policy will be made known to customers, e.g. clearly advertising the search policy. There may be particular issues in the policy which benefit from consultation with customers – for example, if you are thinking of installing water fountains, where regulars would like them to be. Although the drug policy should ensure that customers' health and well-being is safeguarded to the best of the license holder's ability, it is also fair to say that clubbers should take responsibility for their own welfare.

PREVENTING DRUGS AND WEAPONS ENTERING THE VENUE

The policy should set out very clear procedures to minimise the amount of drugs and weapons that come into the venue. A search policy should be formulated and should cover the form and regularity of searches, the provision of amnesty boxes, a complaints procedure and the procedure when drugs or weapons are found. Particular and separate attention may need to be given to searching for firearms, knives and corrosive substances such as acid.

PREVENTING DRUG DEALING AT THE VENUE

Procedures should be laid down to ensure that all staff are vigilant to prevent drug dealing. Several key issues should be covered including: expectations of door supervisors, the regular supervision and monitoring of the building, particularly any key areas where drug use or dealing may take place, the use of CCTV and ensuring that toilets are attended at all times. There should be a system for logging and pursuing information from staff members, customers or outside agencies about any suspected drug dealing. [Read the Tackling Drug Dealing section for detailed advice.]

FINDING DRUGS

The policy needs to be very clear on what staff should do if they find drugs in order to minimise any legal risk to staff. The policy should include the following:

- The recording of suspected drug finds in an incident book
- Procedures for the safe and secure storage of drugs
- The process for handing over drugs to local police
- Procedures for emptying amnesty boxes
- A clear procedure agreed with the local police service about the circumstances in which they expect to be called
- Actions to be taken against any customer found with drugs

KEEPING DRUG USING CUSTOMERS SAFE

The policy should set out the expectations of all staff in being vigilant in identifying customers who are suffering from the effects of drug use. The roles of those providing any medical/welfare service, bar staff and door supervisors in particular should all be clearly stated. It should be clearly identified who has the responsibility for helping drug users in distress. The policy should make it clear that the business will do its best to safeguard customers from the point at which they join the queue to ensuring that they are safe to travel home. The policy should explicitly state that door supervisors must not eject drug users in distress without ensuring they have the means to get home safely and a companion to help them do so. [Read the Reducing the harm from drug use section for detailed advice.]

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

The policy should contain clear instructions to staff on how to deal with emergencies. It should cover arrangements for the training of club medical/welfare/First Aid staff and for ensuring that sufficient numbers of trained staff are always present. It should specify where any medical treatment should take place and in what circumstances an ambulance should be called.

Procedures for dealing with heat stroke and customers who are disoriented and hallucinating should be clear for all staff. A system for keeping staff up-to-date with new trends and patterns of drug use and any common medical consequences should be instituted.

RECORD KEEPING

The policy should stress the importance of keeping accurate records as a legal safeguard to staff and the organisation, and as a professional manner of operating. An incident log (either paper-based or easily accessible online) should be kept where details of all drug-related events should be recorded including suspicions, third party information etc. Information should be recorded concisely.

TRAINING

A drug policy will only be effective if all staff have adequate and regular training. The drug policy should link in to a co-ordinated approach to training which also covers such key issues and procedures as security, dealing with drunkenness etc. The policy should contain details of the training expectations for the different groups of staff listed below.

Training for door supervisors

All door supervisors are required to be licensed. To attain their licence, candidates complete a compulsory training course which covers searching and drugs awareness. Details of relevant training are provided by the SIA (details in resources section of this website).

Training for medical/welfare staff

This may be provided by one of the specialist organisations who provide medical and welfare services at festivals and clubs whose details can be found in the resources section of this website.

Training for cleaners

Cleaning staff should receive training in safe methods for the handling of any drugs and disposal of any drug paraphernalia found.

Training for all staff

BIIAB provides a Level 2 Award in Drugs Awareness for Licensed Hospitality Staff; this qualification is for anyone working in licensed premises who may be exposed to illegal drug activity and is designed to give the learner the knowledge and confidence they need to help prevent and deal effectively with any drug related problems. The training takes either one day or 10 guided learning hours. For more details check out BIIAB in the resources section of this website.

In addition, staff training should cover the health and safety of staff in implementing the different requirements of the drug policy.

RELATED TOPICS & RESOURCES

- **Creating a safe physical environment**
- **Planning your first event/festival**
- **Pre-event briefing checklist**
- **Your duty of care**