

What to do when you find drugs



Practical and legal advice on how to deal with drug finds at pubs, clubs and festivals.

Where suspected controlled drugs are found on customers during a search, door supervisors have three options:

1. They can seize the items and allow entry to the customer.
2. They can seize the items and refuse entry.
3. They can seize the items, make a citizen's arrest, and hand the customer and confiscated items over to the police when they arrive.

LIAISON WITH POLICE

The local police service should make it clear which approach they favour and the license holder's drug policy should make it clear what is expected of staff. Most police services will ask licensed premises to make a general distinction between small amounts of substances which are clearly for personal use and larger amounts which appear to indicate drug dealing. In discussions, police officers should be as specific as possible when defining what amounts they consider to be for personal use and what constitutes dealing.

SEIZING DRUGS

When door supervisors seize the items (whether they allow the customer entry or not), they should place the drugs in an evidence bag and deposit the bag in the amnesty box, in front of the person from whom they were taken and, if possible, a colleague. As an additional precaution, it is recommended that door supervisors hold the evidence bag up in plain view of a CCTV camera. This safeguards the door supervisor from any accusations of taking the drugs for personal use. The door supervisor should then immediately complete a Drug Find Record Log entry like the example shown at the end of this document. It should be noted that a door supervisor taking drugs from a customer in this way is protected under the law. These procedures also preserve continuity in the evidence chain to maximise the chances of any subsequent prosecutions being successful.

HANDLING DRUGS

Even if substances are in bags, they should only be handled when wearing gloves (basic disposable medical gloves are the easiest to keep available).

This is to prevent staff's fingerprints contaminating items which may be used as evidence. It is also essential to use gloves when handling all substances as a minority of drugs (such as Fentanyl) can enter the body through the skin and affect the handler.

RECORDING FINDS

It is best practice for venues to issue each door supervisor with several numbered evidence bags at the start of the night's work. The numbers should be recorded and signed for by door supervisors so that all bags can be accounted for at the end of the night. Evidence bags are self-sealing, individually numbered and tamperproof, they are often provided by the local police service.

FINDING DRUGS ON THE PREMISES

If any member of staff finds a substance they believe to be a drug, they should place it in a bag in front of a colleague and place the bag in the drug amnesty box. The member of staff should then complete a brief Drug Find Record Log form as described above.