Chapter 2: Conducting effective search procedures

Rights to search

As a door supervisor, you are still a private member of the public and therefore have no legal or statutory right to search any person without permission.

It is most important, therefore, that you obtain permission (beforehand) from a person you wish to search. Searching someone without the necessary consent could result in:

- criminal proceedings for assault being taken against you
- civil action (compensation) being taken out against you and/or the venue
- a criminal case against a person who committed a crime failing, as the search that found the evidence was illegal as consent was not obtained

Types of search

The types of searches you will undertake as a door supervisor will be dependent on the types and potential customers of premises at which you work. What you are required to do will be specified in the venue's search policy, which is a part of the admissions policy. You must follow these guidelines at all times. Subject to your venue's search policy, you may be required, for example, to search:

- people (and/or their bags) on entry
- people already inside the premises
- the premises (specific rooms or the whole building)

Searching people

As part of a venue's admissions policy, people may need to be searched before entry. The requirement to consent to a search before being allowed entry is usually to stop people from bringing in any weapons, drugs, sharp objects, suspect packages or other unauthorised items. Weapons are items that are made, adapted or intended to be used to cause injury to another person.

The search policy should be clearly displayed at the entrance to the venue. There are 3 types of search selection policies:

General – everyone is searched.

Random – selection is based on a random factor such as every 5th person.

Specific – a specific person is selected as there is evidence or an indication that they may be concealing an illegal or prohibited item.

Search refusals

As consenting to a search at the entrance is a condition of entry, anyone refusing to be searched should be politely but firmly refused entry. If a venue has a 'point of entry' search policy, this should be clearly displayed at the entrance to explain the requirements to potential customers, and the reasons for it. Any refusals should be noted in the search register or incident log.



Chapter 2: Conducting effective search procedures

Searching people and their property

Searches should be conducted in a friendly, routine way to reduce any feelings of embarrassment that the person might feel and they must not be seen as an act of discrimination by way of any particular door supervisor. When carrying out searches of people and their possessions, it is important that consideration is given to protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 and the laws relating to discrimination in Northern Ireland (see module 1, chapter 2). This includes age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex or gender. All searches should be carried out in a polite and courteous manner to avoid violent behaviour. Some people may feel intimidated or worried when being searched, while others may be used to it. You should talk to people as you search them to help make them feel at ease, this also gives you the opportunity to explain the search policy. If it is feasible to do so, have an empty table in a dedicated search area so that you can ask people to empty the contents of their pockets and bags onto it for inspection, prior to their outer clothing being searched.

You should try to carry out the search as quickly and as efficiently as possible, thanking them for their assistance afterwards.

To prevent any false allegations of theft being made against you, you should always try to have another door supervisor or member of staff present during a search to act as a witness or in case of violence.

If you can, try to carry out all searches within the view of CCTV.

Special care should also be taken when searching people who may be in possession of drugs as there is a possibility of infection from the drugs themselves or from dirty needles. You can now buy needle-resistant as well as rubber gloves for searching purposes, which are ideal for these situations.

When the emphasis on the searching is for weapons, you may wish to use slash-proof gloves as protection against knife injuries or you can use search wands, metal detectors or archway metal detectors (AMDs). These pieces of equipment can indicate the presence of both knives and firearms.

Before you physically touch another person, you should ask them:

- for their permission
- whether they have anything that they should not have
- whether they have anything that could injure either themselves or you
- whether they have any knives, needles or other sharps in their possession

When and how often to search

Some venues will have a policy where every potential customer is searched prior to entry (GENERAL), whereas others only search odd customers now and again (RANDOM). This acts as a good deterrent.

Some venues only search customers who they believe for some reason may be in possession of unauthorised items (SPECIFIC).

Whatever the system for selecting people to be searched on the premises is, the same search rules apply.

Searches may be:
GENERAL
RANDOM
SPECIFIC



Chapter 2: Conducting effective search procedures

Body searches need to be made in a thorough and systematic way to ensure that nothing is missed. You should devise your own method of searching and should use the same system every time so that you do not forget to search particular areas.

A good way to search is to start from the top at the front and work your way downwards, then move behind the subject to repeat the process.

All searches must be carried out with consideration and respect for the person concerned. As a security operative, you should show sensitivity when searching transgender individuals.

Searching rooms or buildings

Outside areas, buildings or individual rooms within the venue may also need to be searched before opening and closing.

Door supervisors may also be required to search for:

- weapons
- suspicious or missing people
- criminal activity, e.g. drug dealing
- suspect vehicles
- suspect packages
- signs of intrusion
- stolen, missing or damaged property

Specific pre-entry searches of the venue may be carried out by door supervisors to ensure that the premises are safe and free from any hazards prior to the first customers being allowed to enter.

Before conducting such an area search, you must ensure that you have sufficient support from colleagues to be able to conduct the search efficiently, effectively and safely. You also need to ensure that you have any necessary equipment with you to assist in the search and that you have a suitable method of calling for assistance if necessary.

Lockdown procedures and closing checks should be carried out with the duty manager - this is to ensure that all windows and doors are locked. Closing checks should also ensure that no patrons are left in the toilets, VIP areas or areas in which it is easy to stow away or fall asleep.

Search documentation

Venues that require the security team to search people or their property must provide a suitable method of recording searches.

Proper search records help to:

- ensure and show that search policies are being complied with
- identify reasons for individual searches
- protect security staff against malicious allegations
- protect the person who is being searched
- act as evidence in criminal proceedings

Most venues will provide door supervisors with a formal search register or book to record details of searches conducted at the premises. Some venues require search details to be recorded on an incident report form or just by CCTV, unless an item is found and secured.

Search records, when used, are to be completed by the door supervisor(s) conducting the search and should contain details such as:

- day, date and time(s) of search
- location of search
- details of person searched
- details of the door supervisor searching (and any witnesses)
- reason for search
- details of search refusal
- details of anything found during search
- any action taken
- signature(s)

Searching safely

For your own safety, you should only search someone of the same sex as yourself. This is to prevent any malicious allegations being made that you have indecently assaulted a person while effecting a search. There is nothing wrong with a male door supervisor asking a female to empty the contents of her handbag and pockets onto a table so that her property can be checked (often called self-searching), but he should not 'pat her down' or otherwise touch her to detect unauthorised items. Using self-search techniques will help to reduce the risk of infectious diseases.

Many venues that carry out regular searches now employ door supervisors of both sexes for this very reason.

The SIA has produced a guidance document called 'Trans customers: A guide for door supervisors'. This can be located at:

www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Documents/sia-ds-trans-guide.pdf

Chapter 2: Conducting effective search procedures

Dealing with property found during a search

Any stolen, illegal, suspect or unauthorised items found must be dealt with correctly, following the venue's search policy. The DPS and control room should also be informed when unauthorised items are found. Possible actions, depending on what is found and under what circumstances, may include:

- giving a verbal warning
- reporting to your supervisor or line manager for advice
- reporting to the DPS for advice
- looking after item for the customer until they leave
- seizing item and refusing entry
- seizing item, arresting customer and calling the police

Any items, including drugs that are seized, must be kept securely or placed in the drug amnesty box if available. The items should then be properly recorded and reported following the local policy.

Always follow the procedures specified in the venue's search policy.



Additional considerations

Although all members of the public need to be treated with respect and consideration during a search, particular care should be taken when dealing with people with physical or learning difficulties and with children and young people.

When searching children and young people, it is important to remember that the search should be conducted in the presence of another individual, ideally a parent, guardian or other responsible adult. Children and young people should not be asked to remove clothing, other than outer garments like coats, gloves and hats. They should be spoken to in an appropriate manner while informing them of what's happening and why. If you need to search a child or young person, you should obtain consent of a responsible adult. The child or young adult must fully understand what is happening and why they are being searched. Searches should be conducted by a person of the same sex as the child or as the young person.

As a door supervisor, you should also be aware of other people's cultural and religious beliefs and values, which may be slightly different to your own.

Incidents or accidents

As a door supervisor, you must record all incidents or accidents that occur during a search, you must complete an incident report form and the incident or accident should be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, with the emergency services contacted if needed.

You must always follow the venue's policy/ assignment instructions.