Chapter 3: Drug-misuse legislation, issues and procedures relevant to the role of a door supervisor

Drugs

All drugs are potentially dangerous, but more so when they are misused or abused for non-medical or recreational purposes. The effects of different types of drugs vary widely, depending on the strength of the dose, the amount taken, the abuser's state of mind and health, and whether they have been taken in conjunction with other substances such as alcohol. The quality of drugs bought on the streets will also vary, with differing degrees of purity and strength.

Add to these the risks from the various methods of taking the drugs and it is easy to understand why most countries around the world have had to bring in laws to regulate their manufacture, sale, distribution and possession.

Nightclubs and pubs have traditionally been seen as good places for drug dealers to sell their wares, and it follows that buyers will go to certain licensed premises purely to buy drugs. Door supervisors working at such venues have a moral, professional and legal duty to prevent the illegal sale and use of controlled drugs and to try to reduce the effects of such abuse, such as overdoses and accidents.

In order to keep incidents like these to a minimum, it is necessary to prevent drug dealers from entering the premises to supply drugs, and to prevent users from bringing their own drugs in.

Misuse of Drugs Act

In 1971, the Misuse of Drugs Act was brought in to regulate the use of 'controlled drugs' and defined numerous offences under the act. It also defined 3 categories of drugs according to their toxic effect, prevalence of use, danger to society and their subsequent penalties for misuse.

Drugs offences

The Misuse of Drugs Act lists a whole range of different drugs offences that can be committed by the various people in the chain. It is important that as a door supervisor, you have at least a very basic knowledge of these so that you can understand what offences can be committed by whom and what powers you have to deal with them.



The main offences include:

- **manufacturing controlled drugs, i.e. growing or making them**
- **possessing a controlled drug, i.e. having them on you or having control of them**
- **possessing a controlled drug with intent to supply, i.e. having a large supply and intending to share or sell them to others**
- **supplying or offering to supply drugs, i.e. sharing, selling or offering them to others**
- **allowing controlled drugs on premises, i.e. knowingly permitting someone to possess, use or supply drugs on premises over which you have some control**

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Types of illegal drugs

All of the major controlled drugs found in and around licensed premises have been listed here, but there are other lesser-known and little-used drugs in each of the categories.





Class A drugs

The most harmful drugs are found under this category, namely the narcotics and hallucinogenic drugs. Narcotics were included in this class because of their dangerous addictive qualities, and the hallucinogenic drugs because of the violent reactions and activities of those who take them.

Crack cocaine, cocaine, crystal methamphetamine, methadone, heroin, LSD, MDMA (ecstasy), psilocybin (magic mushrooms).







Class B drugs

These are middle of the range in the seriousness of illegal drugs.

Amphetamines, barbiturates, ketamine, cannabis, codeine, Ritalin.





Class C drugs

There are many drugs listed under this category, most of which are benzodiazepines or tranquillisers.

GHB, Rohypnol, anabolic steroids.

Other less harmful drugs are restricted under the Medicines Act, and many other drugs are available under prescription from a doctor.

The law on so-called 'legal highs' changed in May 2016, when the Psychoactive Substances Act came into force.

This new law made it illegal to supply any psychoactive substances for human consumption, to sell them or even to give them to anyone.

The punishments for doing so range from prohibition notices, warnings or up to 7 years in prison.

Drug dealers

Drug dealers come in all shapes, sizes, races and ages, and make it their business not to stand out or bring attention to themselves. For this reason, you will need to be particularly vigilant to prevent regular dealers from starting up business on your premises.

Dealers tend to position themselves in the same place whenever they visit a venue so that their customers get to know where to find them. These places tend to be the darker, more secluded areas of the pub or club, usually as far away from the door staff and CCTV as possible.

They will often spend much of their time looking out for people who might be watching them.

Dealers also sometimes use 'runners' and 'minders' to help them carry and supply the drugs, so regular short visits to a suspected dealer by another person would warrant further observations, particularly watching for any obvious passing of cash or the drugs themselves.

Signs that might indicate that drug dealing is taking place at the venue might include:

- individuals being approached by lots of different people
- people making regular trips to the toilets with different people
- obviously covert conversations followed by exchanges
- a reduction in sales of alcohol
- information from customers or staff
- drugs litter being found





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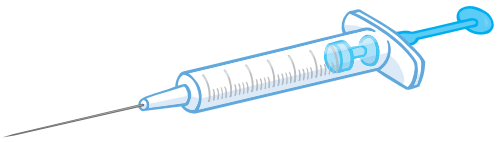
Drugs litter

While the premises are open, and at the end of the night, you will need to check for drugs litter which might indicate that illegal drugs are being used or sold on the premises.

Drugs litter includes any packaging that the drugs might come in, or items that have been used to take the drugs.

Drugs litter includes:

- syringes and needles
- magazine paper wraps
- small pieces of cling film
- small self-seal bags
- hand-rolled cigarette ends with cardboard filters
- torn cigarette paper packets



Signs and symptoms of drugs misuse

It is also important that as a door supervisor, you are able to recognise when someone is suffering from the effects of illegal drugs. It is a part of your role to prevent entry at the front door to anyone showing signs that they have taken drugs, but also to be able spot anyone inside the venue who may have taken drugs after getting in.

Because there are so many different types of illegal drugs out there, and because people react to drugs in different ways, it is often difficult for a door supervisor to tell exactly what type of drug someone has actually taken.

Common symptoms include:

- uncoordinated behaviour
- irritability or aggression
- repetitive movements or actions
- mood swings
- confusion
- overexcitement and/or talkativeness
- dilated pupils
- obvious signs of stress or anxiety
- dizziness
- traces of powder under the nose
- bloodshot or watery eyes
- repeated sniffing or twitching
- excessive sweating
- looking drowsy
- falling asleep
- unconsciousness

Finding drugs during a search

One of the main reasons that door supervisors are tasked to search customers at the entrance to the venue is to prevent illegal drugs from being brought on to the premises. The venue's search policy will explain exactly what you need to do on finding what you suspect to be an illegal drug during a search. If, for example, you search a customer at the point of entry and find a small magazine wrap containing a white crystal-like substance hidden away in the back of the person's wallet, then you would certainly have reasonable grounds to suspect that the substance might be cocaine.

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OPTION 1:
Cocaine is a class A drug, and the unlawful possession of a class A drug is an indictable offence, so you would have the power to seize the drug, arrest the customer, call the police and hand both the customer and the drug over to the police when they arrive. The seizure and arrest must be properly reported and recorded (for powers of arrest for various types of drugs see the drugs offences in the 'Civil and Criminal' section).

SCO

Scotland: There is no legal right to arrest in Scots law, but there is a common law of detaining the person for the police.

OPTION 2:
Alternatively, you could seize the drug, refuse entry to the customer and then record the find and report it to a supervisor or the DPS, before putting the seized drug somewhere secure until it can be dealt with.

Which option you take will be determined by the circumstances and your venue's search policy, but both options are lawful. Some venues decide to arrest and call the police on anyone caught in possession of drugs, whereas others prefer to just refuse entry for small amounts, only arresting when large amounts indicating dealing are found.

Certainly, should you find anyone actually dealing drugs on the premises, they should be arrested and you should hand them over to the police, provided that it is safe for you to do so.

If you suspect that a customer is regularly selling drugs at the venue but you cannot actually catch them committing the offence yourself, then the DPS and the police should be informed. The police may decide to start covert or plain-clothes observations on the premises themselves.



SAFETY

Door supervisors should only seize drugs and arrest people if it is safe to do so. Never put yourself in any unnecessary danger.

PPE should always be worn before handling any form of drugs litter.

Any needles found should be stored in proper sharps boxes, or an empty bottle if a sharps box is not immediately available.

Bloodstained tissues or bandages should be placed into a proper contamination bin, such as the sanitary towel bin, or can be flushed down the toilet.

