



# Drugs in Business and Public Premises - Guidance for Staff

**Produced by**

Highland Drug & Alcohol Action Team  
Highland Council TEC Services

Northern Constabulary (Inverness Area Command Community Safety Department)  
safeinverness (ICCM)



## HIGHLAND



Highland Drug & Alcohol Action Team is a partnership organisation which brings together representation from health, social work, police, education and other related agencies who deal with substance misuse. It oversees the development and implementation of drug and alcohol strategies across the Highlands.



Highland Council provides a range of services to the communities of Highland. Their Transport, Environmental and Community Services deal with issues relating to discarded needles etc.



Northern Constabulary, through the Inverness Area Command, are working towards reducing crime and the fear of crime within the city of Inverness and its surrounding communities. Working in partnership with other agencies, it has been possible to provide a high quality booklet providing information on how to deal with the misuse of controlled drugs in business premises.

**safeinverness**  
THE CITY IN THE HIGHLANDS

INVERNESS  
CITY CENTRE  
MANAGEMENT 

The safeinverness initiative is part of the Inverness City Centre Management. It aims to make Inverness City Centre a safe and secure environment where people can live, work and socialise without fear of becoming a victim of crime.

## INTRODUCTION

Drugs use is a complex social problem that raises a number of issues. This booklet is intended to look at one particular aspect - the use of illicit drugs on premises to which the general public have access.

The use of drugs on premises can not only affect the health and safety of staff, customers and clients, but also places certain obligations on owners and managers. The responsibilities of managers are outlined on page 5. It can compromise the reputation of the company or establishment involved and deter potential business. Well-managed premises with appropriately trained staff are less likely to attract problems relating to drug use.

This guidance booklet provides information and advice on these issues. This will help managers, staff and designers of premises to:

- consider design options
- deter illicit drug use
- deal with incidents safely

The information in this booklet is intended only as guidance and reflects currently acknowledged good practice. It is the responsibility of individual organisations to obtain advice about specific aspects of these recommendations where appropriate.



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## THE LAW – YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The managers of business and public premises have specific responsibilities – make sure you read this section carefully.

### Legislation

The Misuse of Drugs Act, 1971 places obligations on the owners, managers and staff of premises in relation to the use of illegal drugs.

The law states that it is an offence for the occupier or any person concerned in the management of premises to knowingly permit or allow any of the following activities:

- **Producing or attempting to produce a controlled drug**
- **Supplying, attempting to supply, or offering to supply a controlled drug**
- **Consumption of illicit drugs**

### It is important to understand some of the terms:

A controlled drug is any drug included under Misuse of Drugs legislation. This includes heroin, amphetamine, cocaine and cannabis.

‘Occupier or any person concerned in the management’ includes any worker who has the authority to admit or exclude someone from the premises or who has responsibility for enforcing rules in the premises.

‘Knowingly’ means that you have actual knowledge that a prohibited activity is taking place – you have seen it yourself or you have been reliably informed.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – There is a duty on employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of both staff and those who may be affected by their undertaking.

This is underpinned by The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulation 1999, which requires an employer of five or more staff to carry out a risk assessment and record the findings. With respect to drug use this should cover areas such as violence to staff, how to decrease the risk of injury, what to do if a needle or paraphernalia is found and what to do if injury occurs.

Under The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Duty of Care), sharps and blood-contaminated products are classified as clinical waste and must therefore be disposed of using a registered clinical waste carrier. This responsibility lies with the occupier of the premises.

Be aware of your responsibilities relating to reporting any criminal activity on your premises to the police or Crimestoppers. Also involve the police if drug-related activity presents a threat to staff or members of the public.

## COMMONLY- USED DRUGS

### Cannabis

Cannabis is most commonly found in two forms: resin and herbal. It can be smoked in hand rolled cigarettes or pipes.



### Heroin

Heroin is usually a powder. It can vary in colour from white to brown. It can be smoked by heating the powder on metal foil then inhaling it through a rolled up bank note or type of straw. It can also be injected when the powder is mixed with a fluid and then heated on a spoon or other implement prior to injecting.



### Cocaine

Cocaine can come in two forms, a light coloured crystalline powder or in small waxy lumps (crack). In the powder form the drug is sniffed. This may be done from a smooth hard surface, or from an implement or the back of the hand through a rolled-up bank note or type of straw. Crack cocaine is smoked by placing the rocks in either a manufactured or homemade pipe.



### Amphetamine

Amphetamine (speed) can come in powder, paste or tablet form. It can be taken in a number of ways; swallowing and sniffing are the most common.



### Solvents/Gases

There are a number of different substances that are used. These can include aerosols, butane gas, glues, correction fluids and polishes.



## SIGNS OF DRUG USE

- Hand rolled cigarettes or the remains of these; rolled up pieces of cardboard.
- Waste tinfoil or pieces of cling-film. Tin foil may be stained or show signs of burning.
- Small pieces of paper, repeatedly folded.
- Needles, syringes, swabs, spoons and candles/ lighters.
- Traces of powder on flat hard surfaces.
- Distinctive or unusual smells.
- Blood or blood-stained items.
- Persons loitering or spending an unusual amount of time in, or in the vicinity of, certain areas (particularly toilets).

## HEALTH ISSUES

People may have concerns about the transmission of viruses that are commonly passed on through illicit drug use. These include HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and hepatitis B and C.

**HIV** is a virus that prevents the immune system from working correctly. It is mainly transmitted through sharing injecting equipment, blood transfusions and unprotected sexual activity. It is not passed by casual contact. The virus is fragile and dies quickly after blood dries up. There have been no confirmed cases of infection to the general public from accidental needle injuries.

The **hepatitis B** virus attacks the liver and is highly infectious. It is present in blood, semen, vaginal fluid and saliva and can be spread through sharing injecting equipment, blood-to-blood contact, unprotected sexual activity and from needle injuries.

The **hepatitis C** virus also attacks the liver. It is most commonly spread through sharing drug equipment but can occasionally be passed on through high-risk sexual activity. It is more common amongst drug users and much more robust than the HIV virus – it can survive outside the body for some time.

Up to 20 different harmful micro-organisms can be transmitted via an infected needle. However it should be noted that most discarded needles are usually left in conditions unfavourable for the survival of viruses over long periods of time.

Protection against hepatitis B by vaccination is available and usually consists of three separate injections over 6 months. There is currently no immunisation against HIV or hepatitis C.

### First-aid advice for dealing with needle stick injury:

- Gently squeeze the wound to encourage bleeding
- Wash the wound with soap and warm water – don't suck or scrub the area
- Seek medical assistance immediately
- Some post-exposure treatments are available
- Counselling of staff should be offered

Incidents of needle stick injuries should be reported under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1955 (employers should hold "Occurrence" forms).

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Toilets are the most common location for drug-related activity on premises. It is therefore worthwhile to consider their design and layout.

### Design And Layout

- Public toilets, toilets within public houses, nightclubs, shopping centres, restaurants etc. vary in size and shape.
- When considering the design and construction, some general principles should be considered.
  - Lighting
  - Lines of sight
  - Controlling access
  - Fixtures and fittings
  - Construction materials

### Lighting

- Consider blue fluorescent tubes as the primary or preferably sole light source for toilet cubicles. Anyone attempting to use the cubicle for intravenous drug use would have difficulties in finding a suitable injecting site on their body if this type of lighting is used.
- Such lighting should be protected by polycarbonate diffusers secured to the lamp holder to prevent vandalism.
- Using blue light adjacent to normal lighting reduces its effectiveness due to cross pollution. Therefore where possible, separate blue from other sources of light, including natural light.

### Lines of Sight

- Avoid alcoves or recessed areas within toilets. These secluded parts could become a magnet for drug users and dealers who wish to operate in areas difficult to view.
- Staff or supervisors visiting toilets can quickly ascertain possible problems if they have a clear view of the area on entering. Erect signs which indicate that toilets are regularly checked by staff.
- Cubicles should be constructed in such a way that there is a gap at floor and ceiling level. This will act as a deterrent and make loitering obvious. Where the cubicle is of a more solid construction the door should have a gap, both top and bottom.

### Controlling Access

- Problems often occur in toilets due either to drug use or the handling of stolen goods. Research has shown that the implementation of a system using keys or tokens obtained from staff is of benefit.

## Fixtures and Fittings

- All toilet cisterns should be hidden and secured behind panels. This prevents people from using the flat surface for the preparation of drugs or for administering them. An unsecured cistern can also be used for the disposal of syringes and other paraphernalia.
- The purchase of toilet roll dispensers, towel holders and drying machines with smooth rounded surfaces is also recommended.
- Many companies now manufacture washbasins and urinals with sloping tops and sides, again with a view to making it difficult to use as a platform.
- Avoid placing chairs or benches in toilets, as this encourages people to remain there longer than necessary.
- Cubicle door locks should also be considered. Research has shown that more flimsy locks are better as a deterrent.

## Construction Materials

- Starting with the ceiling: avoid the use of easily moveable ceiling tiles as this space or void areas have frequently been found to contain drugs or discarded drug paraphernalia.
- Walls should be smooth plaster, painted, tiled or securely panelled.
- Ventilation covers should be of a robust, fine mesh, securely fitted to prevent the space being used for disposal purposes.
- Flooring should be solid, tiled or covered with smooth industrial quality lino. Avoid the use of carpet or carpet tiles due to hygiene and cleaning problems.
- Avoid flat, smooth areas that can easily be used as a worktop to divide or prepare drugs, or as a platform for sniffing.
- Improvements can be made to existing flat surfaces within toilets by applying rough surface coating to smooth surfaces.

## Risk Assessment

It is the employer's responsibility to carry out risk assessments covering the following:

- Training for staff
- Procedures for handling needles and avoiding accidental contact
- Accidental contact
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (eg gloves)
- Suitable arrangements for disposal of needles and other discarded equipment

It is strongly recommended that premises purchase a Sharps Disposal Kit or Spills Kit from TEC Services.

## HOW TO DEAL WITH DISCARDED EQUIPMENT ETC

- If there is any blood or other body fluids present, they should be regarded as infectious and dealt with accordingly.
- Staff must always follow the recommended procedures when carrying out any task which may involve potential contact with blood or body fluids.
- Wear an apron and gloves.
- Healthy and intact skin is the most effective barrier against infection. Cover all sores, cuts, bitten nails, warts etc on hands with waterproof plasters.
- Sharps and Spills Kits containing absorbent granules and sharps containers etc can be obtained from TEC Services.
- TEC Services should be contacted for advice, support, cleaning of large spills and collection of needles or waste.

### **You must wear gloves:**

- If dealing directly with blood and body fluids or items soiled by such fluids.
- If it is necessary to handle sharp objects (needles, syringes, knives etc.)
- If handling other objects or fluids of unknown origin.
- If handling suspect drug paraphernalia.

### **Sharp Objects**

- Handle all sharp objects (needles, blades etc) with extreme care and only when absolutely necessary.
- Never bend or break a sharp object.
- Never dispose of needles down toilets or drains and do not put amongst other normal waste products.
- Use a specialised sharps disposal container if you have one (available from TEC services).
- If you do not have a container and need to remove a sharp object from an area, place it temporarily in a rigid container until collected by TEC Services.
- Contact TEC Services to arrange collection of needles or containers. It is the responsibility of managers to arrange this.

## Cleaning Procedures

- If there are large spills of blood or body fluids, consider contacting TEC Services for advice and support.
- Clean up smaller spills immediately with a Spills Kit (available from TEC services).
- Cover spillage with absorbent granules, if available, and leave for 2 minutes before clearing up.
- Clean the area thoroughly with detergent and hot water.
- Disinfect hard surfaces using a solution of hypochlorite solution (bleach) diluted to a ratio of 5 parts water to 1 part bleach.
- Ensure that all spillage has been removed from the area.
- Use a shampooing machine or steam cleaner afterwards if dealing with a carpeted area.
- Discard all materials and waste by placing in a yellow plastic liner as supplied in the Spills Kits. Contact TEC services to arrange disposal.

## SUMMARY

- **Check your responsibilities as a manager/staff member**
- **Ensure appropriate staff training is in place**
- **Carry out risk assessments**
- **Purchase Sharps and Spills Kits**
- **Implement preventative measures**
- **Follow cleaning and disposal guidance**
- **Get advice from TEC Services if equipment, advice or collection of needles or waste is required**

## USEFUL CONTACTS

**For further advice, collection of needles etc and purchase of Sharps and Spills Kits, contact:**

Highland Council TEC Services/ Bio-hazard Response Team -  
Office hours 01463 715087  
Out of office hours 07748 745968

The Bio-hazard Response Team will deal with:

- Body fluid and blood spill cleaning
- Specialist house cleaning
- Cleaning after body disposal
- Uplift and disposal of needles
- Uplift and disposal of clinical waste
- Police cell cleaning

There may be a charge for these services.

**If you have information on drug-related crime or activity, contact:**

Northern Constabulary (Community Safety Officers) **01463 228440\***

**To report drug-related crime or activity (free and in confidence), contact:**

Crimestoppers **0800 555111\*\*\***

**For information about the safeinverness initiative, contact:**

safeinverness (Inverness City Centre Management) **01463 723534\***

**For further information about drug and alcohol issues, contact:**

Highland Drug & Alcohol Action Team **01463 704603\***

Highland Drug & Alcohol Information Line **0844 848 3778\*\***

Know the Score Drug Helpline **0800 587 5879\*\*\***

Highland Drug & Alcohol Action Team website **[www.hdaat.org.uk](http://www.hdaat.org.uk)**

Know the Score website **[www.knowthescore.info](http://www.knowthescore.info)**

\* office hours

\*\* weekdays 9.30am – 1 pm



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