



Drugs and the law

What happens when you're stopped by the police and found to have illegal drugs.

You may be charged with possessing an illegal substance if you're caught with drugs, even if they're not yours.

When it comes to possession for personal use, the police may be able to steer you away from the criminal justice system, especially if you're under 18. In practice, they'll choose from the following range of options:

- Refer you to Youth Services if you're under 18, who will decide what to do
- Give you a 'community resolution'. You won't get a criminal record, but it will show up on an enhanced DBS check.
- Issue a 'deferred prosecution', which is an educational programme designed to divert you away from using drugs.
- Give you a conditional caution, which involves you doing a course or unpaid work.

The options may vary depending on your age, where you live and whether you've committed drug or other offences in the past. A persistent offender will be prosecuted. If you're under 18, the police are allowed to tell your parents or carers.

Dealing or supplying drugs

You'll be charged if you're suspected of supplying drugs (dealing, selling or sharing).

Your penalty will depend on the amount of drugs found and whether you already have a criminal record.

Drugs and driving

It's illegal to drive under these circumstances:

- You're unfit to do so because you're under the influence of legal or illegal drugs
- You have certain levels of illegal drugs in your blood (even if they have not affected your driving).

Penalties include a driving ban, a large fine, or even imprisonment. A conviction for drug driving also means your car insurance costs will increase significantly and if you drive for work, your employer will see your conviction on your licence.

What happens when you're stopped by the police?

The police have the power to stop and search you if an officer has reasonable grounds to believe that you've been involved in a crime or are in possession of a prohibited item, including drugs, weapons and stolen property. Depending on what the police find on you during a search, you could be arrested.