

STUDY UK DISCOVER YOU



INTERVIEW WITH A DOOR SUPERVISOR



Kamla Uppiah is a university student at Manchester University and the Director of Serenity Security Solutions Ltd. We asked her a few questions about how international students and visitors can keep safe in clubs, bars or venues.

What is the role of a door supervisor?

The role of a door supervisor is mainly customer service. The door supervisor is there look after the welfare of the customers in the venue and to make sure they have an enjoyable and safe night. We are the first point of call for our customers and work closely with local police and other agencies to reduce crime and create safe spaces in our venues where people can relax.

Why do you work as a door supervisor?

I chose this job because I feel like I'm doing something to help the community stay safe and reduce crime in my area, such as looking after vulnerable customers like students or visitors who don't really know the UK or the area. I take pride in the fact that I have resolved many conflicts which without my intervention would have resulted in violence. For most of us it is actually a very emotionally fulfilling job in many respects and we do enjoy looking after people.

What would an international student need to know about the rules and regulations of entering and staying safe in your venue?

Always bring your ID with you, usually a passport or driving licence as some venues only accept that type of ID. If you are unsure of what ID to take, then call the venue before you come.

Respect the rules of the venue. Generally that would be turning up in a sober state and not having any prohibited items, for example bottles, cans, drugs or sharps (needles) in your possession. You can check the dress code of the venue online or by calling the venue in advance. The door staff will let you know of any specific rules in that venue and usually they are displayed on a notice at the front door. This could include no drinks allowed outside after a certain time (normally 11.00 p.m.). You should also be aware of noise pollution – door staff will ask you to respect the rights of local residents and be quiet when you leave the venue in the early hours of the morning. As a student you may well want to visit the venue again, so respecting the rules and building a rapport with the door staff is essential.

It is also useful to have a bit of knowledge about the laws in the UK if they differ from your country of origin. For example, since the 2007 Smoking Ban it is illegal to smoke inside any venue.

What would you advise an international student or visitor to the UK about staying safe in a bar or club?

Firstly don't be afraid to talk to the door staff, especially if you have never been to the country before, we don't bite! We have local knowledge that may aid you and we are there to help you if you get

into any difficulties during your night out. If somebody is targeting you, giving you excessive unwanted attention, intimidating you or anything else that you may consider negative, come and speak to us and we will deal with the situation safely and professionally allowing you to continue having a good night. Never try to deal with a difficult situation by yourself or resort to violence.

Stay with your friends at all times. Go to the bathroom with a friend if possible and never leave drinks unattended at any time as 'spiking' (when someone adds drugs or alcohol to your drink without your knowledge) is not uncommon. Always keep your valuables on your person and do not take drugs, especially from people you don't know. If you have taken a drug and it turns into a medical problem then be honest with the door staff, we aren't here to judge you, just to make sure you are safe and well. We can't assess the problem adequately if you lie to us and in some cases it can mean the difference between life and death. If you have any particular medical issues that may require a first aider during the night, such as epilepsy or diabetes it is always best to let the door staff know so that should something happen to you we know what to do. If you carry an epi-pen you need to make us aware, especially if we are conducting searches. Always keep emergency contact details with you so we know who to call if something does go wrong. If you aren't confident with spoken English, let us know where you are from so that in the event of an emergency we can advise the emergency services that a translator may be helpful.

Why are customers asked to leave a bar?

The main reason customers are asked to leave a venue is for being overly intoxicated. It is part of UK licensing law that a person who is visibly intoxicated must not be allowed to remain on licensed premises. Different venues will tolerate different levels of intoxication but the bar or nightclub is a licensed premises and so we have

to ask customers who are overly drunk to leave, it's nothing personal. Other reasons are violence or aggressive behaviour, dangerous behaviour that compromises the health and safety of yourself or others, harassment of another customer and breaking venue rules or breaking the law, for example smoking inside the venue, drug related crime or theft. As door supervisors we are here to protect the customers and also the venue's licence. If you follow the rules we will have no reason to ask you to leave and we would never ask you to leave without a valid reason.

What do door supervisors do to ensure customers are safe after they have left the venue?

A door supervisor will be able to tell you where the nearest trusted taxi rank is and in some cases call a taxi for you. If there are any disturbances on the street that we are aware of we will send you in the safest possible direction. It is ultimately down to the customer to be smart and look after their own safety once they have left the venue. My advice is always have a plan. Before you leave the house make sure you know how you're getting home and make sure you've set money aside for a taxi. Never try to walk home on your own – an international student under the influence of alcohol makes a good target for criminals. Don't get your phone out while you're walking as that just advertises the fact you have an expensive gadget on you. Always make sure someone sober knows where you are and knows your plan for the night. Stay with your friends, always travel in groups and stick to well-lit areas preferably areas that have a lot of people in them. If you do encounter a problem or feel like someone is following you go to the nearest public place or speak to the nearest door supervisor. We will then take action to make sure you get home safely such as allowing you to stay with us until a group or individual that is bothering you has left, find you a taxi, or in some cases keep you safe while you call the police.