

Meeting	SPA Policing Performance Committee
Date	17 March 2022
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Police Scotland Response and Analysis on Spiking
Presented By	Detective Chief Superintendent Laura McLuckie, Specialist Crime Division
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes Appendix A - Spiking Information Toolkit

PURPOSE**Response to Action 20211209- 011**

The purpose of this report is to provide a more detailed analysis to SPA Policing Performance Committee in respect of spiking in Scotland, and the policing response to this.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Reports of spiking are not new and typically increase slightly during the months of September/October. This coincides with University and Colleges commencing their first term and in particular Fresher's Week. Incidents of suspected spiking are recorded as either drugging or administering a substance for sexual purposes and until recently, have involved the spiking of drinks only.
- 1.2 In October 2021, following reports in the media and social media of spiking by injection, public concern understandably increased. This resulted in an increase in reporting to police services across the UK, including Police Scotland.
- 1.3 This increased public concern and reporting has come in the midst of a national discussion in respect of women's safety and calls for more to be done to keep women and girls safe. The Police Scotland message focuses on the importance of women and girls feeling and being safe, when in public spaces.
- 1.4 Given the increased public concern, Police Scotland implemented a Gold Command structure led by an Assistant Chief Constable under the name Operation Precept. The purpose of this was to effectively co-ordinate activity across Scotland, engage with strategic partners and to contribute to the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) Gold Command structure (DCC Jason Harwin, NPCC Drugs Lead) and response, from a Scottish perspective.
- 1.5 Weekly Gold and Silver meetings were held, comprising key internal and external partners, including Scottish Ambulance Service, Public Health Scotland and NHS24, allowing up to date information and intelligence to be shared between business areas.
- 1.6 A wider partnership meeting also formed part of the command structure drawing membership from across the licensed trade, night time economy, National Union of Students and third sector representation from Victim Support Scotland, Rape Crisis and Crew2000. This meeting provides a platform for information sharing, consistent messaging and for members to raise concerns, which facilitates an improved holistic understanding of the scale and impact of spiking, ultimately informing how best to respond both as individual agencies/organisations and collectively.

2. PREVALENCE AND ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS

- 2.1 Since October 2021, Police Scotland have monitored closely the number of recorded crimes. Between 1 October 2021 and 16 February 2022, there have been 394 recorded crimes, 385 have been classified as 'drugging' with 9 being classed as 'administering a substance for a sexual purpose'.
- 2.2 Each case is individually reviewed and investigated, with there being an absolute determination to support the victim, and where criminality can clearly be evidenced, to bring the perpetrator to justice. The figures of course do not tell the full story, and within the 394 number of reports received, there is a wide array of different circumstances, reported criminality, threat, harm and risk.
- 2.3 As with any criminality reported, it is necessary to consider all these factors, when progressing prioritised investigations, with local policing divisions and SCD discussing the cases as a matter of course, and ensuring national consistency.
- 2.4 The data of course changes on a daily basis, as cases are reported to us, investigations progressed and as forensic results are received. Below provides some additional context of the cases reported to us in this time period:
- The majority of victims are female.
 - The majority are aged between 18 and 26 years of age.
 - 9 victims, have been reported to having been subject, or potentially subject, to a sexual assault. It is clearly vital that these enquiries are prioritised and investigations are currently live.
- 2.5 Significant analytical work has been completed and continues to be undertaken, in order that Police Scotland can maintain an up to date picture of volume and any potential trends or links to specific premises. The majority of reports continue to be within large cities, involving young women, although some young men have been victims too. A large proportion involve alcohol consumption and some involve the consumption of illicit or prescribed drugs.
- 2.6 Spiking investigations are complex by nature, with third sector partners advising that victims are often reluctant to come forward for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they cannot recall what has taken place and feel they won't be believed. Police

Scotland continues to work with third sector partners, encouraging victims to report any potential spiking incident as early as possible, as this will ensure best evidence can be captured.

- 2.7 As would be expected, investigations focus on a number of strands, including victim testimony, witness testimony, CCTV and forensic analysis. On the occasions when victims report the matter to us, with such a period of time having passed that it placed the incident outwith the forensic window in which it would be possible, following analysis, to identify either the alcohol and/or drugs in the victim's system (and the levels thereof), and as such in these instances, forensic analysis will not provide any wider investigative yield. Investigations have and are of course still being progressed, as the absence of forensic opportunity does not diminish the trauma felt by the victim and demonstrates the need for, and benefit of, anyone who is concerned that they might have been the victim of spiking, to report this to us at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 2.8 This leaves a significant number of reported cases which we are currently investigating and as part of that, with the support of Forensic Services, progressing forensic examinations. Within this grouping, there are naturally significant differences in the individual reports, from these being in some instances quite specific in nature, to in others, a member of the public reporting more generalised concerns, following a social night out. In each of these cases, the available forensic sample is being / will be analysed, with Police Scotland and Forensic Services working together, along with a lab in England to progress these as quickly as is possible, against a backdrop of a challenging wider demand on Forensic Services in particular Toxicology and the increased UK demand seen in this area.
- 2.9 Forensic analysis to date has revealed a number of prescribed, illicit and what would be classed as recreational drugs contained within samples. Of note and since the previous update provided to members, ketamine and a metabolite of diazepam have been seen in 2 victims' analysis. These drugs could be used for recreational use but could also be used for spiking. Further enquiry will be made with regards to these cases.
- 2.10 Spiking continues to remain a significant focus for Police Scotland. A victim centred approach, thorough investigation and working with partners to ensure that women and girls are and feel safe in public spaces, is key. As such and as an organisation committed to

continual learning, a review has been commissioned of the approach and response to date.

3. PREVENTION AND PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE

- 3.1 As articulated earlier in the paper at 1.6, a wider partnership meeting was convened. Of particular focus was the delivery of sensitive and appropriate prevention activity and communications. This focussed on safer spaces and perpetrator behaviour, rather than placing the focus and onus on potential victims.
- 3.2 A Corporate Communications toolkit was developed and shared with Divisional Commanders, for their use both internally and externally. Its creation was intended to provide consistency and support to partners, including licensed premises, with the ability to signpost to third party organisations. The toolkit has also been shared with the Partner's meeting group to promote consistency in messaging (**Appendix A**) for dissemination.
- 3.3 Wider engagement has been led by the Partnerships Prevention and Community Wellbeing (PPCW) portfolio. This has included work with health partnerships to ensure wider understanding of the issue and to support evidence recovery. Links have also been made with other key partners including higher education, the licensing trade and Local Authorities, as well as the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit. There has also been a refresh and reinvigoration of the ByStander Awareness work. PPCW Division and Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) worked together to add information specific to spiking to the current ByStander Awareness Package. It has also been included in the Best Bar None Programme, which is being launched in April 2022 following the pandemic.
- 3.4 The Partner's meeting allowed Police Scotland to respond to concerns raised by stakeholders. One such example being concerns that victims could be reluctant to report, if they had recreationally used illicit drugs. A document was prepared by Police Scotland and shared with the National Union of Students, reassuring potential victims that their report will be taken seriously and investigated fully.
- 3.5 On Wednesday 26th January 2022 Superintendent Hilary Sloan, PPCW Division, attended and gave evidence on the Police Response to Spiking to the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young Persons Committee chaired by Stephen Kerr MSP. The

Committee was keen for the partnership approach to respond to the issue of Spiking to continue.

- 3.6 It is recognised that all genders may be affected by drink spiking or spiking by injection and the Project Vigilant framework has been adapted accordingly. Lessons learned have also been used to develop Police Scotland's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.
- 3.7 Scottish Government previously held round table discussions with stakeholders, Universities and representatives from the Night Time Economies to consider wider policy and ways to create safer spaces, in which Police Scotland fully participated. The second and final round table discussion took place on Wednesday 8th December 2022. There are currently no plans for any further Round Table events.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Police Scotland takes the recent increase in reports of Spiking very seriously and recognises the impact this can have on our communities. The establishment of a Gold Command structure and the activity outlined above, is designed to reinforce a professional, victim focused, investigative response, whilst providing consistent messaging and reassurance to report such incidents. Police Scotland will continue to engage with partners to understand the full impact of Spiking and to address concerns, ensuring that a preventative message continues throughout the year and is reiterated in advance of Freshers' Week 2022.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

It was immediately recognised that Police Scotland’s response to Spiking needed to be proportionate, victim focussed and collaborative, to provide reassurance. The Gold Command Structure highlighted at Section 1.4 ensured a robust, comprehensive and consistent response, with key collaboration between partners north and south of the border, ensuring that public confidence was maintained.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

The increase in incidents of Spiking generated significant media activity both through conventional channels as well as social media, resulting in concern, particularly amongst the student community. A Community Impact Assessment was compiled and monitored regularly by PPCW, with a sense check undertaken at each Partners Meeting, where it was reiterated that any sudden changes or concerns could be fed quickly and effectively through the established partnership network. This has been maintained post conclusion of the final meeting and can be monitored and acted upon, should the need arise.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

None identified

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

None identified

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

APPENDIX A – SPIKING INFORMATION TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the toolkit for spiking awareness. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide consistent messaging and reassurance about Police Scotland's approach to reports of incidents of spiking in pubs and clubs across Scotland.

We would like your support to ensure all licensed premises, including student unions, and all relevant stakeholders have information about spiking and how to prevent it. We hope this will provide reassurance to communities and those who attend licensed premises.

Included in this toolkit is:

- Information about spiking
- Key messages/statement
- Guidance for licensed premises
- Links to further information and guidance
- Suggested police divisional social media posts
- Suggested posts for licensees

Background

This year, reports of spiking by injection circulated on social media and were picked up by the media. This resulted in an increase in reports to police forces across the UK, including Police Scotland. This has come in the midst of a national discussion about Violence Against Women and Girls, concerns around women's safety and calls for more to be done to keep women safe.

Police Scotland has a role to play in issuing advice and information around spiking, to provide reassurance and to warn perpetrators that we are taking this criminality seriously. We work in collaboration with partner organisations on prevention. This toolkit supports these objectives.

Our messaging is focused on bystanders and perpetrators. We want people to report if they see something suspicious, to step in if they think someone may be at risk or see someone behaving suspiciously.

Most people reporting incidents of spiking, whether in drinks or by injection, are women, aged between 17 – 27 years of age. Most incidents occur at the weekend. While the number of incidents reported continues to reduce, it is likely that this is an under-reported crime.

National Message

Police Scotland's national, positional statement is:

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Assistant Chief Constable Gary Ritchie, PPCW, Police Scotland said:

"We continue to investigate reports from people having been "spiked" either with a needle or in their drink. Thankfully there has been a reduction in such instances and at this time we do not believe that any of the reports are linked. We are not always able to determine the reasons why a perpetrator carries out an assault in this way, but would like to reassure you that every report is taken seriously and perpetrators are dealt with swiftly and robustly.

"People, should be able to go out for a night out without fear of being spiked. We are working with a range of partners, both locally and nationally, to ensure licensed premises are safe spaces for all, through the continued delivery of ByStander Awareness training.

"We are also working in partnership with other emergency services, student bodies, Universities/Colleges and Third Sector organisations to raise awareness and provide support for anyone effected.

"We would encourage anyone who believes they have had their drink spiked or been assaulted in this way to contact Police Scotland on 101 or in an emergency 999."

Target Audiences

- Offenders
- Bystanders (including licensees)
- Students: significant concern has been reported by student bodies
- Wider public

This information and messaging will be aimed at bystanders and perpetrators.

We want to support licensees and those who work in pubs and clubs to spot the signs of spiking and ensure their premises are a safe place for all.

We want to reassure communities including student communities, that we take all reports seriously and that we will thoroughly investigate them all.

We want to encourage people to report any incidents of spiking and emphasise to offenders that we are taking all reports very seriously. It is hoped that by working with licensees we will have a deterrent effect on potential perpetrators, if they see that premises are taking real action against spiking.

We want to deter offenders.

Police Scotland Key Messages:

- People should be able to go out for a night out without fear for their safety including being spiked.
- Spiking, whether by adding drugs or alcohol to someone's drink, or by injection, without their consent, is a criminal offence.

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- We are not always able to determine the reasons why a perpetrator carries out an assault in this way.
- Spiking can put people at significant risk of harm.
- Police Scotland takes every report of spiking extremely seriously and will investigate robustly.
- We are working with a range of partners, locally and nationally, to ensure pubs and clubs are safe spaces for all.
- We are providing advice and support, working in communities, with licensees, pubs and clubs. We are also offering bystander training to help spot the signs of when someone may be at risk.
- We are reaching out to student communities to offer advice, support and reassurance.
- If you believe you have been targeted or subjected to spiking whether by injection or in your drink, or think that a friend or someone you know has been targeted, then please report to Police Scotland on 101, or in an emergency always call 999.
- Anyone who reports being spiked will be taken seriously. Our investigations are victim-centred, ensuring people who report a crime are supported. Our focus is on investigating the crime being reported and identifying potential offenders.
- We would encourage anyone who believes they have had their drink spiked or been assaulted in this way to contact Police Scotland on 101 or in an emergency 999.

Attachments:

- Guidance for the licensed trade
- Links to further advice and information
- Social Media messaging

Relevant campaign messaging

Guidance for the Licensed Trade/Student Union

Spiking is when someone adds alcohol or drugs to another person's drink without their knowledge or consent and is a criminal offence.

Spiking by injection is when a needle is used to inject drugs into a person without their knowledge or consent and is also a criminal offence.

As a licensee you will want to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your customers when they are within, and around, your premises.

There are a number of steps you can take to help avoid incidents occurring:

- Train your staff to be aware of the possibility of drinks being spiked and encourage them to monitor unattended drinks
- Train your staff to recognise the signs of a person who may have had their drink spiked - this includes suddenly appearing intoxicated, drowsiness, vomiting or being disorientated.

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- If anyone is acting suspiciously around unattended drinks challenge them or ask them to leave the premises immediately
- If a customer reports that their drink tastes or smells unusual, don't hesitate to replace the drink. If there is suspicion that the drink may have been spiked seize the drink and report it to the police immediately
- If a customer reports having their drink spiked be mindful they may not be the only one. Alert all staff, increase vigilance and consider patrols, CCTV monitoring and lighting of your premises
- If a customer appears drowsy, disorientated or showing signs of intoxication take action and assist - particularly those who may have become isolated or separated
- Don't hesitate to assist customers who appear suddenly intoxicated or disorientated - even if they are in the company of others
- Be vigilant and prepared to intervene when strangers offer assistance to anyone within, or outside, your premises
- Door stewards should be alert to persons loitering outside premises for no apparent reason and be prepared to challenge them
- Consider adopting a policy of personal search as a condition of entry to your premises
- Display clear signage informing customers that refusal to be searched will result in refusal of entry
- Consider increased numbers of door stewards to ensure thorough searches of customers
- Stewards should be encouraged to pay attention to items within wallets/purses/small pockets that could easily be missed. All searches should be carried out in a polite and professional manner.
- All incidents of drink spiking or spiking by injection should be reported to the police at the earliest opportunity. This will ensure all investigative opportunities are maximised, evidence is preserved and the likelihood of bringing offenders to justice is increased
- Licensed premises are in a position to make a significant contribution to the safety of their customers and enhance the experience for customers and staff through education and engagement.

Useful Links

Crew2000

[Updates \(crew.scot\)](#)

Fearless

[Home - Fearless](#)

Victim Support Scotland

[Home - Victim Support Scotland](#)

Scottish Alcohol Industry Partnership

[Scottish Alcohol Industry Partnership \(saip.org.uk\)](#)

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Institute of Licensing Scotland
[Region: Scotland | Institute of Licensing](#)

Security Industry Authority
[Security Industry Authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Suggested social media messaging

Social media messaging for divisions

Twitter

Example 1

We all want to enjoy a night out.

Spiking can put people at risk of harm and is a criminal offence. We're continuing to work with licensees to make pubs and clubs a safe space for all.

All reports of spiking will be investigated.

Example 2

If you think someone is spiking or is showing the symptoms of being spiked, report it to bar staff, stewards or the police immediately.

Call us on 101 or in an emergency always dial 999.

Example 3

Signs of spiking appear suddenly and can include appearing intoxicated, drowsiness, vomiting or being disorientated.

If you see someone experiencing these symptoms, report it to bar staff or the police immediately. Dial 999 in an emergency.

Facebook

Example 1

We all want to enjoy a night out.

Spiking can put people at risk of harm and is a criminal offence. We're continuing to work with licensees to inform them on how to spot the signs of spiking to make pubs and clubs safe spaces for all.

All reports of spiking will be investigated. If you or someone you're with thinks they have been spiked, inform bar staff, stewards or the police immediately. Call us on 101, and always dial 999 in an emergency.

Example 2

We're working with licensees to make bars and clubs safe spaces for all.

Signs of spiking can appear suddenly. Symptoms can include appearing intoxicated, drowsiness, vomiting or being disorientated. Victims may be isolated or separated from their group.

If you see someone or if someone you're with is experiencing these symptoms, report it to bar staff or the police immediately. Dial 999 in an emergency.

Example 3

If you think someone is spiking, or is showing the symptoms of being spiked, report it to bar staff, stewards or the police immediately.

Call us on 101 or in an emergency always dial 999.

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For licensed premises:

- We want to keep people safe when they are enjoying a night out. We are working with Police Scotland to prevent spiking and to ensure XXXXX is a safe space for all.
- We are taking steps including increased searches, training for our staff to spot suspicious behaviour and we will also be ensuring anyone who appears vulnerable will be looked after. Together we are working to ensure there is no place for this criminal and dangerous behaviour at XXXXXX

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APPENDIX B – WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU MAKE A REPORT OF SPIKING

Police Scotland takes all reports of spiking seriously and your report will be fully investigated.

The most important concern at the time of the report is the welfare of the person who may have been spiked. Your safety and welfare is our priority and medical assistance will be requested if necessary.

Our investigation will focus on the crime reported and on identifying those responsible for potential spiking offences. Officers will want to maximise all opportunities to fully investigate your report, so once your welfare is taken care of, they will ask you to provide an account of what has happened. They may also want to speak to your friends or people you were with, as they may be able to provide additional and important detail. This will allow officers to understand what has happened and to put an appropriate plan in place.

You may be asked to provide a urine and/or blood sample for analysis at our laboratory. These will only be taken with your full consent.

You will never be forced to provide these, but they will assist the investigation. These may be taken at a Police Station or other appropriate place.

You will also be advised of partner agencies who may be able to support you.