



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

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Police Headquarters, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich IP5 3QS
Telephone: 101 or 999 in an emergency Fax: 01473 613737 (24 hrs)
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Advice for night-time economy venues re: Spiking

INFORMATION

This document is created to provide guidance and advice to venue owners, licensees and staff to aid in dealing with incidents of potential drink spiking.

Reports of spiking by injection/needle stick can potentially fuel public concern and anxiety. It's important to recognise that these type of incidents that have emerged in recent weeks are part of a national picture on the issue, and not just solely confined to Suffolk.

There is a need for police, local authorities and licensed premises to work together to reassure the public and support the night-time economy industry.

LEGISLATION

Spiking of any nature, be it by adding to a person's drink or by administering of injection is an offence under Section 24 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 (administer poison or other noxious substance with intent to injure, aggrieve or annoy a person.) This is an indictable only offence, meaning a case can only be heard in the Crown Court and carries a potential custodial sentence of 5 years in prison.

This offence is not limited to illicit drugs, the offence occurs if alcohol or another legal substance (e.g. sleeping tablets) is added to a person's drink.

If the victim's life becomes endangered, they receive significant injuries or become a victim of sexual offences or robbery the maximum sentence is increased to 10 years. Alternative offences may also be considered that could result in increased sentencing, to a maximum of life imprisonment, for example if the victim were to sustain life changing injuries, or the incident results in a fatality.

IMPACT

This type of crime is both frightening and traumatic for victims, who feel personally targeted, invaded and often suffer loss of physical / muscular control, as well as memory loss. Some drugs may also cause a victim to act in an erratic / violent manner or lose consciousness.

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RESPONSE

A pro-active partnership based approach to drink spiking will increase the level of public awareness and support available for those who believe they may have been targeted. It will give them the confidence to report such instances, knowing that their allegations would be treated seriously and reassure them that they are safe within our night time economy venues. This in turn is likely to increase opportunities for justice to be served through prosecution against offenders.

We are therefore advising licencees to consider implementing the following:

1. Educate their staff to spot the signs of both potential vulnerable victims and those who are potentially suffering the effects of spiking.
2. Provide their staff with awareness of forensic handling of evidence (securing any glasses and drinks used by potential victims and/or suspects) and securing other evidence, such as CCTV.
3. Regularly check CCTV to ensure it is in good working order and reliable.
4. Promote campaigns - particularly #Spikeaware through visual, well placed posters and other literature within their premises.
5. Consider purchasing preventative tools, to highlight their commitment to prevent incidents of drink spiking. For example - the purchase and application of screening kits can be used to test drinks for key substances.
6. Maintain a stock of suitable urine sampling pots, which will assist the police by securing early evidence for later testing.
7. Review their policies to ensure a safeguarding approach is taken in respect of all incidents related to spiking and embed a culture of “believe, reassure and request assistance” for those making reports.
8. Consider create “safe zones” where potential vulnerable victims can be looked after by staff until alternative help or transport home can be provided.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

Depending on whether a drug was used, the signs that someone has been ‘spiked’ can appear in as little as 15 minutes and can, potentially, last for several hours. Several of the symptoms mirror the effects of alcohol and that can make it difficult to know if someone has had their drink ‘spiked’ – however, the main difference is how severe the symptoms are and how quickly they can take hold. While alcohol can severely affect someone, it often takes numerous drinks before that occurs. Drugs, on the other hand, can start affecting someone within a few minutes.

If someone is displaying the below symptoms and you’re concerned about them, check they are safe, reassure them, request assistance from colleagues and the ambulance service. If they believe they have been spiked, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, contact the police.

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There are a range of things to look out for, which include:

- Confusion
- Nausea or vomiting
- Hallucinations
- Disorientation
- Loss of ability to communicate properly
- Paranoia
- Poor coordination
- Unconsciousness

EVIDENCE AND FORENSIC ADVICE

❖ **The victim**

It is important to remember the victim is a potential crime scene. Whilst the victim's safety and security must be the primary consideration, thought should always be given to potential available evidence. Key points to consider are:

- a) Injuries or puncture wounds – These areas may hold evidential forensic opportunities. Where possible avoid contact with these areas of the victim's body and consider if the area can be protected by the victim's clothing, prevent the victim washing or cleaning these areas if possible.
- b) Consensual contact areas – as above, if the likely perpetrator has been in contact with victim prior to the spiking, prevent washing or cleaning of these areas. (These are likely to be areas of exposed skin such as the face neck or hands.)
- c) Drink – if the victim is still in possession of their drink, keep it secure. Consider placing it in an unused, clean container (e.g. a sealable sandwich bag). Place the bag containing the glass in a secure location and prevent it from spilling. Where possible, wear latex gloves and handle the glass by the least obvious areas (e.g. the very bottom of the glass), this will assist in preventing contamination or loss of evidence.
- d) Where possible ask the victim to provide a urine specimen in a suitable sample pot.
- e) Do not ask the victim questions about the perpetrator. If a member of staff believes they can identify the perpetrator, make sure they tell the police at the time.

Wherever possible, one member of staff should deal with the victim to ensure continuity of evidence and reassurance for the victim.

❖ **The perpetrator / Suspect**

Remember, every contact leaves a trace, therefore the perpetrator may have forensic evidence from the victim on their person and may still be in possession of articles used to spike the victim.

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If you believe you know who the perpetrator is and they are still in the premises/area, do not confront them, but make sure the police are aware when you call.

a) If you can identify the perpetrator;

Consider securing any glass/bottle they may have used. (Only do this if the glass/bottle is no longer in the possession of the potential perpetrator.) As with the victim's glass, secure this in an unused, clean bag (a sealable sandwich bag is ideal). **DO NOT MIX THE VICTIM'S AND SUSPECTS GLASSES OR PLACE IN THE SAME BAG.** A different person should deal with each glass and they should not come into contact with each other during the process.

b) Secure CCTV of the perpetrator entering/leaving the premises and any footage of the perpetrator and victim together within the premises.

c) Consider how the perpetrator has paid for entry or drinks. Is this via a credit/debit card? If so, can you identify times of payments made.

❖ **Promotion & Prevention**

Literature will be made available which should be placed within premises to highlight the awareness of incidents of spiking and the fact that the premises is working with the police & local authority to prevent and deter such incidents. #Spikeaware is widely used across the country and Suffolk will follow suit.

Where possible premises should provide other literature to signpost customers to helpful advice regarding alcohol and drugs, e.g. TalktoFrank, DrinkAware etc.

Venues should consider increasing the use and level of searching as a condition of entry. Whilst not fool proof, use of a "metal detector wand" will increase the chances of perpetrators with needles being caught and prevent other dangerous objects entering your venue.

There are many products on the market designed as preventative measure to stop drink spiking. Items such as "NightCap", "StopTopps" and "Spikey" are just a few products available for purchase on the open market. None of these products are endorsed or promoted by police services. Each licensee should consider undertaking their own research and identify which product may work best in their premises.

Screening tests can also be purchased. These are tests that can provide an early indication of whether a drink has been spiked with particular substances. This provides reassurance to customers and reflects positively on venues. If a venue chooses to employ this tactic, it is important to continue to support and re-assure a potential victim, even if a test result is negative. A record of each screening test should be made. This record should include the date and time of the test, the result, who completed the test and, where available, the name of the potential victim.

There are a variety of drugs used for spiking and no screening product has been found to be 100% effective in all eventualities. No specific product is endorsed by the police service and each licensee may wish to complete their own research and drawn their own conclusion as to what will work for their venue.

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❖ Safe Zones

It is recommended that an area is set aside, which allows potential victims to feel safe in, where they can recover and/or await assistance from the ambulance service, family, friends or the police. These areas should ideally be away from large crowds, loud noise and interference from potential perpetrators. A quiet area will also assist emergency responders to communicate with potential victims, while still at the venue.

CONCLUSION

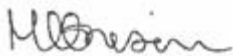
We believe that by employing some or all of these measures, members of the public will have increased awareness of the issues allowing them to be more vigilant. Customers will feel safer in the venue, knowing it is aware and has supportive measures in place to help those affected; and knowing that staff have had some awareness training and care for customer wellbeing.

These measures, whilst also likely to have a positive impact on venue reputation, will prevent crime by deterring offenders – who will know there is increased risk in being caught due to the increased awareness and vigilance.

I would like to personally thank you for taking the time to read this advice and guidance letter and look forward to continue working with you to prevent spiking in Suffolk.

If you would like to discuss anything in this letter further please get in touch by email, PoliceAlcoholLicensing@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

Kind regards



Marina Ericson

Chief Superintendent
County Policing Command