

Debate Pack

Number 20220242

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Prevention of spiking incidents

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1 Background

1.1 The nature and scale of spiking

Spiking refers to the practice of administering a substance to a person without their knowledge or consent. It can be perpetrated in two main ways:

- **drink spiking**, which involves adding alcohol or drugs to a person’s drink with the intention of intoxicating them
- **needle spiking**, which involves injecting a person with drugs or other substances

Drink spiking has been a well-known issue for many years. However, needle spiking is a more recent development, with the issue first attracting attention in October 2021.¹

Reports of needle spiking increased throughout October, with some press reports describing it as an “epidemic”.² However, some medical experts expressed doubt as to how widespread needle spiking was in practice, given the difficulties of trying to inject someone with drugs in a busy environment such as a club or bar.³

The increased reports led to a range of immediate responses, including:

- The then Home Secretary Priti Patel was reported to have requested an update from police on the findings of their investigations.⁴
- Local campaign groups formed – some under the banner of “Girls Night In” – to highlight personal experiences, boycott night-time economy venues and to call for change.⁵
- Some venues responded by introducing measures such as protective drinks covers, increased entry searches, and ‘women only’ evenings.⁶

¹ See for example “[Nottinghamshire Police investigate 15 reports of needle spiking](#)”, BBC News, 21 October 2021

² See for example “[‘Drinks, needles... what next?’ Inside the terrifying spiking scandal on UK campuses](#)”, Evening Standard, 28 October 2021

³ Full Fact, [What do we know so far about reports of ‘spiking’ with needles?](#), 29 October 2021 and “[Injection spiking: How likely is it?](#)”, BBC [online], 22 October 2021

⁴ “[Priti Patel wants police briefing on needle spiking incidents](#)”, 20 October 2021

⁵ “[Girls Night In: ‘Spiking is part of going out - so we’re staying in’](#)”, BBC News, 27 October 2021

⁶ “[Britain’s biggest nightclub firm introduces drink covers and body searches after injection and spiking cases](#)”, Independent, 26 October 2021 and “[Pub in Nottingham will hold weekly ‘girls only’ night with all female staff after spate of reports of women being spiked with needles](#)”, Daily Mail, 24 October 2021

- A [petition](#) calling for a legal requirement for nightclubs to thoroughly search guests on entry was launched in October 2021. It was subsequently debated in the Commons and closed with over 175,000 signatures.⁷
- The Home Affairs Committee announced an [inquiry into spiking](#) to examine its prevalence, the forms it takes, the impact it has on victims, and the response of police and other organisations (e.g. night-time industries and universities) in preventing and detecting spiking.⁸

Official statistics on spiking are not routinely published.⁹ Limited statistics on spiking case reports were provided by the police in written evidence submissions to the Home Affairs Committee. In evidence dated January 2022 the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) provided the following information on needle spiking:

Since the beginning of September 2021, we are aware of 1,032 cases of needle injection, most of which occurred in the month of October. Information is still required regarding substances; delivery means and motivation or communities of offenders. Of these 1032 cases, where gender has been recorded, 868 victims have been female and 123 males. Although not exclusively targeted against young persons, the average victim age is 22.

The force areas with the most reported needle spike cases are Nottinghamshire (154), Merseyside (92) and Northumbria (85).¹⁰

In December 2022, the NPCC said that between September 2021 and September 2022 nearly 5,000 cases of needle and drink spiking incidents had been reported to forces across England and Wales.¹¹ Forensic analysis was conducted on 800 of these cases, with samples having been selected for testing where the victim agreed, where samples could be taken within a suitable timeframe, and when investigators judged testing would be “proportionate”.¹² The forensic analysis found:

- 24 samples (3%) contained a controlled drug that supported a spiking incident (ie the victim confirmed that the drug detected was not knowingly used by them), with the most common drugs being cocaine, ketamine and MDMA

⁷ Parliament.uk petitions website, [Make it a legal requirement for nightclubs to thoroughly search guests on entry](#) – see also the Commons Library debate pack [E-petition 598986, relating to safety at nightclubs](#) and [HC Deb 8 November 2021 c26WH](#)

⁸ Home Affairs Committee, [Home Affairs Committee launches inquiry into spiking](#), 9 December 2021

⁹ As set out in section 1.2, there is no single offence of spiking so reports are currently recorded against a range of more general offences

¹⁰ NPCC, [Written evidence submitted by NPCC \(SPI0036\)](#) (PDF), January 2022

¹¹ NPCC, [Potential victims of spiking urged to report to police and get tested quickly as nearly 5,000 reports of spiking are made within a year](#), 29 December 2022

¹² As above: on whether testing was proportionate, the NPCC said “It may not be judged as proportionate if, for example, a report was made of spiking at a festival eight days later and there were no other lines of enquiry to identify a suspect.”

- 46 samples (6%) contained a controlled drug declared by the victim, primarily “illegal drugs associated with the night-time economy such as ketamine, cocaine or MDMA” but also including some controlled prescription drugs
- 68 samples (8%) contained a medicinal prescription or over the counter drug
- 444 samples (56%) contained a drug of no concern (ie “one that would not have a rapid sedative effect or cause confusion to a victim), such as paracetamol and quinine, or no drug at all
- 218 samples (27%) contained at least one controlled drug in cases where the police force has not established if the drugs were knowingly used by or prescribed to the victim

1.2

The criminal law

Existing offences

There is no single offence that covers spiking. Instead a range of more general offences can potentially be used to prosecute perpetrators.

Depending on the circumstances, the following offences could apply to both drink spiking and needle spiking:

- **Administering a substance with intent** (Sexual Offences Act 2003, [section 61](#))

This offence is committed where a person intentionally administers a substance to, or causes a substance to be taken by, another person (B), knowing that B does not consent and with the intention of stupefying or overpowering B so as to enable any person to engage in a sexual activity involving B.

The [Explanatory Notes](#) to section 61 state that this offence is “intended to cover use of so-called “date rape drugs” administered without the victim’s knowledge or consent, but it would also cover the use of any other substance (e.g. alcohol) with the relevant intention.

- **Administering poison or other noxious thing** (Offences Against the Person Act 1861, [section 23](#) and [section 24](#))

These offences involve administering (or causing to be administered to or taken by) “any poison or other destructive or noxious thing” to another person. For the section 23 offence, the conduct must thereby endanger the other person’s life, or inflict upon them grievous bodily

harm. For the section 24 offence, the perpetrator must intend to injure, aggrieve or annoy the victim.

- **Drug offences** ([Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#))

If the substance used is a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, such as ketamine or GHB, then the drug offences in that Act (e.g. possession under section 5) could be used to prosecute the perpetrator.

For needle spiking only, injecting someone without their consent could also constitute an assault under the following provisions, depending on the physical harm caused to the victim:

- Wounding or causing grievous bodily harm (Offences Against the Person Act 1861, [section 18](#) and [section 20](#))
- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm (Offences Against the Person Act 1861, [section 47](#))
- Assault by beating (Criminal Justice Act 1988, [section 39](#))¹³

Calls for a specific offence

There have been calls for a specific spiking offence to be introduced. The Home Affairs Committee noted that police witnesses considered a standalone offence would help with data collection and victim support:

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) told us that poor data quality and the absence of a clear criminal offence presented a challenge in policing spiking. A more defined standalone offence of spiking would help the police to “understand the scale of the problem” and “enable a far more accurate picture to be realised” than the current approach where data about needle spiking depends on keyword searches and flagging by individual forces. Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin told us a defined offence for spiking would also allow “enhanced support for victims”.¹⁴

However, the Committee also noted that petitions calling for a specific spiking offence had attracted fewer signatures than one on nightclub safety:

Three parliamentary petitions were open during our inquiry concerning a criminal offence for spiking, two of which related specifically to needle spiking. They had a combined total of around 2,400 signatories, compared with over 175,000 signatures for a petition to make searches on entry to nightclubs a legal requirement. This may reflect greater public concern for practical rather than legal deterrents.¹⁵

¹³ See Crown Prosecution Service, [Legal guidance - Offences against the Person, incorporating the Charging Standard](#) for an overview of relevant offences

¹⁴ Home Affairs Committee, Spiking (PDF), HC 967, 26 April 2022, para 23

¹⁵ As above, para 24

The Committee called on the Home Office to provide a written update on progress towards creating a separate criminal offence of spiking within six months of the date of its report. It considered that the introduction of a specific offence would not stop spiking, but would have several benefits:

First, it would facilitate police work under way to identify perpetrators and patterns of offending by enabling the police to collect better data on the prevalence of spiking incidents. Secondly, it would act as a deterrent by sending a clear message to perpetrators that this is a serious crime which attracts severe penalties. And thirdly, victims would be more likely to report spiking if it were a recognised criminal offence.¹⁶

In January 2022, Richard Graham MP introduced the [Spiking \(Offence\) Bill](#), a Private Member's Bill that sought to create an offence of administering or attempting to administer drugs or alcohol to a person without their consent. Speaking at first reading, Mr Graham said that the existing law had been successfully used in some cases, but that "much in between is not covered, especially where it is not clear or cannot be proved what the purpose of spiking was or where the drug used cannot be identified, including because its effects have already worn off".¹⁷

Mr Graham withdrew the Bill while it was awaiting second reading. On his website he said that he had withdrawn the Bill "after the Home Secretary agreed to look into making spiking an individual offence with a report due back by Autumn 2022".¹⁸

1.3

Government action

[Section 71 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) requires the Government to prepare and publish a report about the nature and prevalence of spiking, including any steps the Government has taken or intends to take in relation to spiking. The report must be laid before Parliament by 28 April 2023 at the latest.¹⁹

The Government had separately committed to reporting to Parliament by 28 October 2022 on whether it intends to introduce a specific criminal offence for spiking. This commitment was initially given by the then Home Office minister Kit Malthouse as the 2022 Act was progressing through Parliament.²⁰ It was reaffirmed in the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee, with

¹⁶ As above, para 26

¹⁷ [HC Deb 26 January 2022 c1022](#)

¹⁸ [Richardgraham.org, Spiking](#) [accessed 10 January 2023]. See section 1.3 for further details of the Government's commitments.

¹⁹ Section 71 is the result of a Government amendment prompted by a defeat in the Lords as the 2022 Act was progressing through Parliament: see section 4.14 of [Library Briefing Paper 9273 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Progress of the Bill](#) for full background

²⁰ [HC Deb 28 February 2022 c785](#)

the deadline brought forward to 26 October 2022.²¹ However, this report has been delayed due to changes in Government and the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and does not yet appear to have been published.²²

The Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's report sets out a range of non-legislative actions it is taking to tackle spiking, including liaising with police on data collection, working with the Crown Prosecution Service on victim support, a communications campaign timed to coincide with the start of the university year, and engaging with industry and licensing authorities.²³

²¹ Home Affairs Committee, [Spiking: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2021-22](#) (PDF), HC 508, 29 June 2022, p3

²² See [correspondence between the Committee and the Home Secretary](#) dated 4 and 22 November 2022 and [PQ 78691 \[on Spiking\]](#), 8 November 2022

²³ Home Affairs Committee, [Spiking: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2021-22](#) (PDF), HC 508, 29 June 2022

2

Media

2.1

News articles

[No evidence of spiking by injection, say police](#)

BBC

08 December 2022

[Restaurant at centre of spiking allegation stripped of licence](#)

YorkMix

17 November 2022

[Mair Howells: Creating a Safe Space for Spiking Victims](#)

Notion

28 October 2022

[Donelan's spiking working group advice is both on time, and yet too little too late](#)

WonkHE

31 August 2022

[How worried should we really be about needle-spiking?](#)

Telegraph

31 August 2022

[Universities warned against 'victim blaming' in spiking response](#)

THE

31 August 2022

[Government to consider revisions to s.182 Licensing Act 2003 guidance as it issues formal response to select committee report on spiking](#)

Local Government Lawyer

05 July 2022

[Government response to the Home Affairs Committee report on spiking](#)

WonkHE

04 July 2022

[Beware of nightclub needles, students told in ad campaign](#)

Times

04 July 2022

[A 'spike' in legislation?](#)

Mountford Chambers

26 June 2022

[Bristol trial tackling drink spiking is hailed a nationwide success](#)

Bristol Cable

21 June 2022

[Drink safety test strips, bystander intervention: How UK unis are tackling drink spiking](#)

Study International

25 May 2022

[Universities told to crack down on spiking after 'brazen' attacks on students](#)

Guardian

24 May 2022

[What will a new working group on spiking achieve?](#)

WonkHE

24 May 2022

[Venues with bad track record on spiking ‘must improve to have licence renewed’](#)

Oxford Mail

26 April 2022

[Cops off clubs: an abolitionist take on anti-spiking activism](#)

WonkHE

26 April 2022

[Prevalence of drink and needle spiking unknown, MPs say](#)

Guardian

26 April 2022

[Spiking victims dismissed as having ‘one too many’, say MPs](#)

BBC News

26 April 2022

[Patel planning law against drink-spiking](#)

Times

20 February 2022

[Only 1 in 16 spiking cases prosecuted](#)

Times

15 February 2022

[Police chief calls for new ‘spiking’ offence](#)

The Justice Gap

28 January 2022

[1,382 reports of needle spiking made to police since September, MPs told](#)

Police Professional

26 January 2022

[There's widespread worry about spiking – are students in danger?](#)

WonkHE

17 January 2022

[Drink-spiking is at 'epidemic' levels in UK, campaigners tell MPs](#)

Guardian

12 January 2022

[Drink and drug spiking victims speak of 'overwhelming shame' as attacks double in a year](#)

Telegraph

12 January 2022

[Spiking happens more at house parties than in clubs, so why does no one talk about it?](#)

The Tab

01 December 2021

[Injection spiking: New medical help from charity after rise in reports](#)

BBC

17 November 2021

[City's clubs and bars to take part in trial of spiked drink testing](#)

Times

10 November 2021

[What do we know so far about reports of 'spiking' with needles?](#)

Full Fact

29 October 2021

[Girls Night In: 'It's so quiet in the city'](#)

BBC

28 October 2021

[Girls Night In: Campaign to boycott clubs sees widespread support in Scotland following reports of spiking across UK](#)

Scotsman

22 October 2021

[Injection spiking: How likely is it?](#)

BBC

22 October 2021

[A scheme to improve nightlife safety is extending across London](#)

Time Out

31 August 2021

2 Parliamentary material

2.1 Early day motions

[Spiking in nightclubs](#)

That this House supports the women in Bath taking part in the Bath Night In boycotts on 27 October 2021, linked to the national campaign to raise awareness of the increase in spiking incidents in nightclubs across the UK; expresses concern at reports of spiking by injection; believes women who report such incidents must be listened to and supported; and urges the Government to convene a conference of senior officers from police forces across the country as a matter of urgency, to draw up a national action plan to tackle spiking.

25 Oct 2021 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 570
(session 2021-22)

Primary sponsor: Hobhouse, Wera

2.2 Debates

[Rape and Sexual Violence](#), HC Deb 08 Mar 2022 cc271-297

[Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls](#), HC Deb 02 Mar 2022
cc1051-1097

[Spiking \(Offence\)](#), HC Deb 26 Jan 2022 cc1021-3

[Nightclub Safety](#), HC Deb 08 Nov 2021 cc25-48WH

2.3

Parliamentary questions

[Spiking: Alcoholic Drinks](#)

Asked by: Gibson, Peter

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle incidents of drink spiking in night clubs.

Answering member: Miss Sarah Dines | **Department:** Home Office

The government and law enforcement have been engaging with the industry on this issue since last autumn. Steps taken to tackle spiking include:

- Meeting representatives of the night time industry to discuss good practice, sharing of good practice and any additional support required (per recommendation 5 of the Home Affairs Select Committee Report on spiking, #HC 508)
- Working with the local government association to provide information to the range of local licensing authorities throughout the country, including sharing best practice and the provision of more information on upcoming activity (for example during the festival season).
- Collaborating with partners to develop informational products including posters and other guidance documents that will help inform staff and customers in night time economy venues of the risks to victims, to raise awareness of the issue, and to share best practice.
- Working with Police force crime registrars to improve the collection and recording of data relating to spiking offence to better reflect the local picture throughout the country. The National Police Chiefs Council have also been monitoring the number of cases at a national level which has helped to inform policy making.

A full summary of the work carried out on spiking will be included in the statutory report due to be published 28 April 2023.

13 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 103046

Date tabled: 05 Dec 2022 | **Date for answer:** 07 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2022

[Spiking: Alcoholic Drinks](#)

Asked by: Gibson, Peter

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential benefits of requiring venues to declare publicly whenever an incident of drink spiking has occurred.

Answering member: Miss Sarah Dines | **Department:** Home Office

We are currently looking across the system to better understand how to respond to these crimes and provide the best support for victims.

All action carried out on spiking will be reflected in the statutory report, due to be published 28 April 2023

13 Dec 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 103045

Date tabled: 05 Dec 2022 | **Date for answer:** 07 Dec 2022 | **Date answered:** 13 Dec 2022

[Spiking](#)

Asked by: Greenwood, Lilian

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Second Special Report of Session 2022–23 of the Home Affairs Select Committee entitled Spiking: Government Response to the Committee’s Ninth Report, HC508, when she plans to update Parliament on whether the Government intends to introduce a specific criminal offence for spiking; and for what reason her Department did not update Parliament on that matter before 26 October 2022 as set out in that Government response.

Answering member: Miss Sarah Dines | **Department:** Home Office

The government is absolutely committed to updating Parliament on the need for a specific criminal offence for spiking.

The Home Office informed the Home Affairs Select Committee on 11 October that the update, while forthcoming, is to be delayed. This is

due to recent changes in government and the death of Her Late Majesty.

We are aiming to provide this update before the Christmas Recess.

08 Nov 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 78691

Date tabled: 03 Nov 2022 | **Date for answer:** 08 Nov 2022 | **Date answered:** 08 Nov 2022

[Universities: Spiking](#)

Asked by: Elliott, Julie

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent spiking incidents at universities.

Answering member: Andrea Jenkyns | **Department:** Department for Education

On 24 May 2022, the former Secretary of State for Education launched a new working group dedicated to tackling the scourge of spiking attacks against university students. This forms part of the wider government mission to tackle violent and sexual crimes, and strengthen victims' rights. The group brings together vice-chancellors, police, campaigners, and victims to produce plans for practical action to help keep students safe. It will report back before the start of the autumn term.

Professor Lisa Roberts, University of Exeter Vice Chancellor, has been appointed to lead the working group and coordinate the higher education sector's response.

Insight and evidence gathered by the working group will be used to inform the government's report to Parliament on spiking, due to be published in spring 2023.

The government has already taken action to reclassify gamma hydroxybutyrate and closely related substances which have been used for drink spiking. It will work with law enforcement and local authorities to tackle spiking incidents, including considering the case for a specific criminal offence for spiking.

Many universities have also set up their own initiatives to tackle the issue. The University of Exeter is offering drink safety test strips, and Nottingham Trent University is funding and delivering bystander intervention training to staff in night-time city venues. The new working group will look at these and other solutions being tested on campuses across the country.

15 Jul 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 32533

Date tabled: 07 Jul 2022 | **Date for answer:** 11 Jul 2022 | **Date answered:** 15 Jul 2022

[Spiking](#)

Asked by: Morris, Grahame

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will create a specific criminal offence for (a) drink and (b) needle spiking.

Answering member: Amanda Solloway | **Department:** Home Office

Spiking is an issue that the government takes very seriously. Perpetrators of such attacks need to be brought to justice, and the Government are committed to achieving that. Everybody has the right to enjoy a night out without fear.

Spiking is already illegal, and there are a range of offences which the police can use to prosecute this behaviour depending on the circumstances of individual cases.

I recognise the concerns that have been expressed that the lack of a specific spiking offence makes it more difficult to identify trends, and my department is considering the case for a criminal offence.

We will not hesitate to legislate if necessary and will inform parliament on the outcome of this consideration in October.

12 Jul 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 31815

Date tabled: 06 Jul 2022 | **Date for answer:** 11 Jul 2022 | **Date of holding answer:** 11 Jul 2022 | **Date answered:** 12 Jul 2022

[Spiking: Music Festivals](#)

Asked by: Ellwood, Mr Tobias

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent spiking incidents at music festivals over summer 2022.

Answering member: Amanda Solloway | **Department:** Home Office

Government is clear. Spiking is a heinous crime and we must stamp it out. We have been working with the Festivals and Outdoor Events sector and the National Police Chief's Council to ensure that they, alongside event organisers, local authorities, law enforcement, and hired security staff are taking appropriate action to protect potential victims and deter would be offenders. This includes opportunities for joint communications, updated guidance for audiences and staff and a shared understanding of the emergency service response to spiking incidents.

A letter will be sent to colleagues across the House shortly setting out further detail.

More broadly, the Government is taking a number of actions to address Spiking, including:

- Working across government to ensure that we have a joined-up and effective response to this issue from education and awareness through to support for victims in healthcare settings.
- Will publish a report in Spring 2023 on the prevalence and nature of spiking and the action that the Government is, and will take, to tackle it.
- Considering the case for a specific offence of spiking.
- Through the Safety of Women at Night Fund, and Round 3 of the Safer Streets Fund, supporting the rollout of pilot initiatives to improve the safety of women in public spaces, including in the night-time economy (NTE).
- Reclassifying GHB and related substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. These are so-called "date rape" drugs, which have been used in drug-facilitated crime (though there is little evidence to link these drugs to needle-spiking specifically)
- Deputy Chief Constable, Maggie Blyth, who is leading the national policing response to spiking has also: improved coordination amongst forces; police crime

recording; work with local health providers; and provided consistent guidance around support for victims.

12 Jul 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 20227

Date tabled: 17 Jun 2022 | **Date for answer:** 21 Jun 2022 | **Date of holding answer:** 27 Jun 2022 | **Date answered:** 12 Jul 2022

[Drinks Spiking](#)

Asked by: Duncan Baker

A constituent who has got in touch with me has had the dreadful problem of having her drink spiked. It has been a dreadfully traumatic experience, but on top of that, she can no longer go out and socialise with her friends because of the anxiety it has caused. What tougher sentencing we can introduce, and what preventive measures can we take to stop this dreadful crime ever happening again?

Answered by: Rachel Maclean | **Department:** Home Department

My hon. Friend is right that drink spiking and needle spiking have a very serious impact. I fully understand the anxiety of his constituent, and of course all our hearts go out to her. I very much hope that she will take some reassurance from the funding that the Government have provided to the Norfolk police and crime commissioner. He has been granted £427,000 for a range of practical initiatives designed to keep women safe on the streets at night, including drink spiking kits, taxi marshals, street pastors and more. I am sure his constituent will be pleased to know that there is already a range of offences under which people can be imprisoned, and some of those offences attract a life sentence.

25 Apr 2022 | Oral questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | 712 c449

Date answered: 25 Apr 2022

[Spiking: Alcoholic Drinks](#)

Asked by: McCabe, Steve

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what (a) estimate she has made of the number of drink spiking-related offences in the last 12 months and (b) steps the Government is taking to tackle that offence.

Answering member: Tom Pursglove | **Department:** Home Office

The recent reports of spiking of drinks are of course concerning. It is not possible with the data that the Home Office holds to provide a full picture on the scale of such attacks or to make accurate estimates into whether or not there has been an increase.

This is an ongoing matter which the police are investigating and the Home Secretary has asked police forces to provide an update.

Action which the Government is already taking on spiking includes:

- Through the Safety of Women at Night Fund, and round 3 of the Safer Streets Fund, the Home Office is supporting the rollout of pilot initiatives to improve the safety of women in public spaces, including in the night-time economy (NTE). These projects, totalling more than £27 million, include:
 - Training packages for NTE staff;
 - Drink spiking test kits in Police vehicles and NTE venues;
 - Upgrades to CCTV and street lighting throughout the country;
 - Educational training programmes for men and boys.
- Reclassifying GHB and related substances from Class C to Class B under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. These are so-called “date rape” drugs, which have been used in drug-facilitated crime (though there is little evidence to link these drugs to needle-spiking specifically).
- Working with the police to better understand the nature of spiking through the crime recording framework.

19 Apr 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 150985

Date tabled: 31 Mar 2022 | **Date for answer:** 19 Apr 2022 | **Date answered:** 19 Apr 2022

[Spiking: Victim Support Schemes](#)

Asked by: Maskell, Rachael

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to incorporate (a) spiking offences and (b) integrated services for victims of those offences in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

Answering member: Rachel Maclean | **Department:** Home Office

Spiking is an abhorrent crime that the Government takes very seriously. The response must be robust and wide-ranging.

The Government has tabled an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that would require the Secretary of State to prepare a report on the nature and prevalence of spiking and the steps the Government is taking to address it. The report must be published and laid before Parliament within 12 months of the passing of the Act.

The Home Office is separately considering whether a specific offence of spiking is needed to target this behaviour directly.

24 Feb 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 126729

[Spiking: Alcoholic Drinks](#)

Asked by: Holden, Mr Richard

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what laws are in place to protect people from having their drinks spiked; and what penalties do those laws carry.

Answering member: Rachel Maclean | **Department:** Home Office

A range of criminal offences are in place to deal with this behaviour. The precise offence committed will depend on the facts of the individual case but the offences available to the police and Crown Prosecution Service include the following:

Section, Act	Description	Penalties
S.18 Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	The maximum penalty for this offence is life imprisonment.

S.20 Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Inflicting bodily injury, with or without weapon.	The maximum penalty for this offence is imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years.
S.23 Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Maliciously administering poison, &c. so as to endanger life or inflict grievous bodily harm.	The maximum penalty for this offence is imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.
S.24 Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Maliciously administering poison, &c. with intent to injure, aggrieve, or annoy any other person.	“To be kept in penal servitude for life” - No specific sentencing
S.47 Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Assault occasioning bodily harm.	“To be kept in penal servitude” - No specific sentencing
S.61 Sexual Offences Act 2003	Administering a substance with intent to engage in a non- consensual sexual activity	On summary conviction: Imprisonment not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both. On conviction on indictment: Imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.
S.39 Criminal Justice Act 1988	Common assault and battery	Imprisonment not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding the level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

We have listened closely to the concerns that have been raised about the lack of a specific spiking offence. The Home Office is now considering a criminal offence to target this behaviour directly and this work is ongoing.

04 Feb 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 116078

Date tabled: 01 Feb 2022 | **Date for answer:** 04 Feb 2022 | **Date answered:** 04 Feb 2022

[Spiking](#)

Asked by: Khan, Afzal

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the outcomes of Devon and Cornwall Police's anti-drink spiking campaign.

Answering member: Rachel Maclean | **Department:** Home Office

This is an issue that the Government takes very seriously. Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning. We have every sympathy with victims and anyone who might feel unable to enjoy a night out without fear. We utterly condemn the people who perpetrated those attacks, and they should be brought to justice.

We are aware of emerging good practice on this issue – for example, Devon and Cornwall Police introduced a force-wide strategy to obtain a more detailed picture of the issue around drink spiking. This is in partnership with other agencies and the licensing trade. Officers are able to utilise drink testing and urine testing to get immediate results when allegations are made. This has been in place since 1st August and has reassured many individuals as well as providing the basis for a more effective and immediate investigation into offences.

My officials are engaging with Devon and Cornwall police to understand more about the strategy and how the lessons learned could be applied to other areas of England and Wales. We are aware of the good work being carried out in areas such as Bristol, and are grateful for the action taken independently by venues to ensure the safety of their patrons.

More widely, the Home Secretary has already asked the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue, and we are receiving regular updates from the police. The police are working locally, regionally and nationally, including with our partners in the National Crime Agency.

The abhorrent crimes of spiking also speak to broader issues of violence against women and girls. We published our new cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls strategy this summer, to help to ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere. We are delivering a pilot £5 million safety of women at night fund, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, particularly in the night-time economy. That is in addition to the £25 million safer streets fund, which focuses on

improving public safety, with an emphasis on the safety of women and girls, and their feelings of safety in public spaces.

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Committee material

[Spiking: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2021-22, Second Special Report of Session 2022-23, HC 508](#) - Home Affairs Committee, published on 4 July 2022

[Spiking, Ninth Report of Session 2021-22, HC 967](#) - Home Affairs Committee, published on 26 April 2022

[Fight against spiking hampered by lack of understanding and poor victim support](#) - Home Affairs Committee, published on 26 April 2022

[What should the Government do to stop drink and needle spiking?](#) - MPs on the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, published on April 2022

Inquiry: [Spiking](#) - Home Affairs Committee – Oral and written evidence transcripts, and other publications

[Oral evidence: The work of the Home Secretary, HC 192](#) - Home Affairs Committee, published on 2 February 2022. (Please see Q261 and Q262 about questions on spiking)

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Further reading

House of Commons Library

Research Briefing – [Sexual harassment and violence in further and higher education](#)

Published Wednesday, 09 February 2022

Research Briefing - [E-petition 598986, relating to safety at nightclubs](#)

Published Friday, 05 November 2021

Government departments, agencies and other public bodies

College of Policing, [Tackling drink spiking](#), 07 December 2022

Local Government Association, [LGA guidance note on drink spiking prevention](#), 07 Sep 2022

Metropolitan Police, [Victims of drugs and drink/drug spiking in 2021](#), August 2022

Local Government Association, [LGA responds to Government response to Home Affairs Committee report on spiking](#), 04 July 2022

Home Office, et al., [Press release: Spiking of university students to be tackled](#), 24 May 2022

Department for Education, [Our work to tackle spiking attacks on university students](#), 24 May 2022

Home Office, [Harsher sentences introduced for ‘spiking’ drugs](#), 13 April 2022

Home Office, [Millions awarded for new projects to keep women safe](#), 12 November 2021

Police Scotland, [Police Scotland statement regarding spiking by injection](#), October 2021

Suffolk Constabulary, et al., [Spiking - Advice for Licenced Premises](#) (Accessed: 21 December 2022)

Other organisations

Universities UK, [Spiking: what universities can do](#), 20 December 2022

Local Government Association, [LGA guidance note on drink spiking prevention](#), 07 Sep 2022

Alcohol Education Trust, [Student designed and informed campaign to #endspiking and promote safer nights out for freshers](#), 07 September, 2022

FiLiA, [Response to: The Home Affairs Committee Spiking Report](#), 06 May 2022

SOS-UK, [Student opinion on drink and drug spiking](#), 04 January 2022

Drinkaware, [Drink spiking and date rape drugs](#) (Accessed: 21 December 2022)

NDML, [8 Ways to help prevent spiking](#), 21 October 2021

Rape Crisis, [What is spiking?](#)

[Stamp Out Spiking](#)

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