

SPIKING –

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND GUIDANCE TO THE LICENSING INDUSTRY.

Overview

Spiking is where alcohol or drugs are added to someone's drink without them knowing, or as seen in the current trend 'spiked' by needles/syringes potentially containing drugs.

Many incidents go unreported due to embarrassment or memory loss. Alcohol is the most common substance used to spike drinks. It can be added to a soft (non-alcoholic) drink without the victim knowing, or double/further measures can be used instead of singles.

Some examples of drugs that have reportedly been used for spiking include:

- gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) and gamma-butyrolactone (GBL)
- tranquillisers, most often benzodiazepines, including Valium (diazepam) and Rohypnol
- ketamine

Some drugs are particularly dangerous when mixed with alcohol because they combine to have a very powerful anaesthetic effect. Such drugs may come in powder, tablet or liquid form and do not always have an unusual taste or smell.

Steps a venue can take to prevent drinks being spiked and in response to reports of spiking are:

- Display prominent signage reminding customers not to leave their drinks unattended and not to accept drinks from strangers.
- Train all directly employed or contracted staff in:
 - how to identify and respond to vulnerable people, including not being judgemental as to cause – dealing effectively with the welfare issues and vulnerability is key
 - the danger of drinks being spiked - encourage them to be alert for unusual requests for additional shots to a drink and to monitor unattended drinks, this is particularly important in areas where drinks are not permitted and therefore are required to be left unattended, for example at the entrance to a smoking area if applicable or adjacent to dance areas
 - encouraging engagement with customers including active bystander training to negate predatory behaviour and offer reassurance that safety is of paramount importance
 - crime scene preservation
 - your venues processes and procedures in responding to spiking and vulnerability
- Make all staff aware to provide immediate assistance to any customer feeling confused, dizzy, hallucinating, nauseous, having poor coordination / disorientated or showing signs of intoxication.

- Anyone who self-identifies as vulnerable or is considered to be so by your staff should be given the option to be taken to a safe area in which they are given first aid or the facility to call family, friends, the emergency services or a taxi.
- If anyone is acting suspiciously around unattended drinks, ask them to leave immediately or call the police.
- It is important that any offences or suspicious behaviours are reported to police at the earliest opportunity. This allows for effective investigation, including timely recovery of evidence, which is essential since some drugs can only be detected for short periods of time from when a sample is taken. A strong working relationship with the local police and partners, together with early incident reporting is encouraged and should not in the absence of other factors be held against a venue.
 - It is recognised that for a variety of reasons, some people will not want the police informed of spiking incidents. They should be informed that reporting an incident should not get them in any trouble, even if recreational drug use has taken place. Their physical capacity to make such a request should be a consideration and venue policies should favour informing the police.
- Venues should consider providing stopper devices, such as lids to put on drinking vessels, which can reduce the risk of a drink being spiked.
- It is recognised that well established schemes exist where some venues use testing kits as a means of detecting certain drugs and providing reassurance to customers, however we urge that you use with caution -
 - Preserving the best evidence- You should consider the impact of using a non-evidential device which **may result in vital evidence being lost**. If this sample is entirely used up, further laboratory testing will not be possible. If this sample is collected or used on a non-evidential device then **it may not be suitable for further testing for court purposes** as sample integrity may be lost.
 - Range of drugs tested - you should consider that most kits only test for a restricted panel of drugs with some of the most common spiking substances e.g. GHB/GBL not being covered. Therefore **it is possible that the kit could give a negative result but miss a true positive** as it does not look for that substance.
 - Limit of detection - you should consider that field test kits are much less sensitive than the laboratory based tests. Therefore it is possible that the kit **could give a negative result however the laboratory would find a positive**.
 - As with other types of field test, you should consider that dip stick type field tests are less specific than the laboratory equivalent, **which can result in false positives**. You should also consider that dip stick type field tests may also be affected by cross reactivity with other drugs. Ultimately timely collection of samples and sensitive laboratory testing would enable the best chance of detecting drugs in such situations.
- Ensure every effort to retrieve and securely retain drinks which may have been affected, identify witnesses and retain CCTV to support police action.
- The key here is education, engagement, and proportionate measures. Staff at venues should not be afraid of explaining to customers that the efforts undertaken are to maximise their safety and in deterring offences.



Further steps regarding the use of injections:

- Venues should consider their stance on searches upon entry and where applicable review their search policy.
- Door Supervisors do not have legal or statutory power to search any person; however, a venue can have a 'condition of entry' whereby customers enter the premises on the condition that the security staff are permitted to search them. If they refuse consent, then they should be refused entry. Signage should clearly explain a venue search policy, which may include the use of metal detector wands or a detecting arch.
- Use of metal detectors at point of entry is great in terms of deterrence and reassurance, however venues should be aware that some devices may not be sensitive enough to detect a lone needle. Note that some people e.g. diabetics will have a legitimate excuse for carrying epi-pens and there are wider Health & Safety considerations in asking security staff to search for needles which should be suitably risk assessed, detailed within search policies and supported by training of appropriate methods and use of Personal Protection Equipment.
- Searches should be carried out courteously and as efficiently as possible, with good engagement between all parties.
- Where random search policies are used, they should be undertaken at a frequency likely to act as a deterrent factor.

- **If you see suspicious activity report it to staff or Police.**
- **If you have any information re who may be committing such offences, report in confidence to the Police or Crimestoppers on 0800 55511.**

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