



## DRINK SPIKING – Information note

### Northern Ireland

Everyone has a right to feel safe on a night out, and the hospitality sector prioritises their safety and welfare, doing everything we can to protect this right. Whilst incidents are extremely rare, when drink spiking (or other vulnerability issues) occur, we take every case extremely seriously. We work hard to create a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment so that all our customers can enjoy a fun night out.

Many venues within the wider hospitality sector have door staff, established search procedures, staff training to identify problems before they occur and training on how to offer support. Venues also have CCTV, and many of them will have metal detectors and other safeguarding measures in place. The Licensing Act also allows these measures to be required through legal conditions on a venue's licence where appropriate and proportionate, and conditions are in place in some venues (some operators will do so voluntarily as a matter of course).

Our industry takes the safety of our customers extremely seriously. Vulnerability and wider customer safety (including reports of drink spiking) remains an ongoing focus of the sector.

This factsheet is intended to bring together in one place the resources developed and made available by both the Government and a wide range of organisations, to bolster the work already ongoing and ensure our venues remain the safest places to enjoy a night out.

#### **What is drink spiking?**

Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 lists a number of examples of spiking:

- Putting alcohol into someone's drink without their knowledge or permission.
- Putting prescription or illegal drugs into an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink without their knowledge or permission.
- Injecting another person with prescription or illegal drugs without their knowledge or permission.
- Putting prescription or illegal drugs into another person's food without their knowledge or permission.

- Putting prescription or illegal drugs into another person's cigarette or vape without their knowledge or permission.

As shown above, drink spiking can be defined as adding a substance to someone's drink without their knowledge. Alcohol is the most common substance to be added, but illegal or legal drugs are other substances that might also be used. This is illegal, and there are a number of different criminal offences that such an action falls under. Any motivation for drink spiking – be it for criminal purposes or any other reason – should not be tolerated as it is a crime.

In addition to drink spiking occurrences, there have been some reports of criminal activity involving needles being used to injure and/or inject customers. Whilst the numbers of such reports remain low, they further underline the need to ensure that welfare and safety of customers remains a key focus for operators.

### **What should I do to prevent drink spiking in my premises?**

There are many resources available (listed below) and actions that can be taken, as outlined above, that can help you to minimise the likelihood of drink spiking occurring in your premises and to assist any customers that are affected by spiking.

### **What should I do if drink spiking is reported in my premises?**

If a vulnerability issue (such as drink spiking) is reported in your premises, there are three key initial actions that should always take place:

- **Always act on the report** - activate the safeguarding procedures you have in place in your venue, and take steps to identify those suspected, if possible, in the situation.
- **Ensure the health and safety of the customer** – this could be by calling emergency services, ensuring they are with trusted friends who will look after them, offering assistance if needed, and ensuring a safe space for the customer.
- **Logging and recording** – report incidences to the police and record the details for further internal action. Review CCTV footage to check if the incident has been captured.

Many venues will have procedures that go above and beyond those noted above for reported occurrences, plus their ongoing internal procedures to prevent vulnerability crimes occurring in the first place. Some venues offer anti-spiking bottle stoppers and protective drink covers, so you may wish to consider this as an option. In addition, drug testing kits have been made available in some local areas provided by the police or local authorities. However, the main preventive measure will always be well-trained, vigilant and supportive staff that know how to respond to situations that they observe or are reported to them.

Another key factor is to demonstrate that those looking to commit crimes in your premises are not welcome. This can be achieved in a number of ways, such as:

- Via communication to your customers as to the signs to look out for (e.g. posters, social media).
- Staff training to enable them to identify potential issues before they develop further.
- Practical and physical measures, such as ensuring that CCTV coverage is optimised (e.g. minimising 'blind spots' through removing obstacles, increasing lighting, using mirrors).

The list of resources below covers all of these actions plus other useful resources for safeguarding within the Night Time Economy:

## Key resources

### Home Office

The Government has published a range of advice, guidance and information documents, [available on the Home Office's website](#). This includes:

- [A spiking factsheet](#) which provides information on what spiking is, why and where it happens, the laws against it and the police's role.
- [Information for venues and festivals](#) which includes posters that you can download to display in your venue and social media materials you can use:
  - [drink spiking posters](#) developed by the Police Crime Prevention Initiative's Licensing Security and Vulnerability Initiative together with the National Police Chiefs' Council
  - [Enough campaign posters](#)
  - [Enough campaign social media materials](#)

The Enough campaign also provides information on spiking organisations which offer UK-wide support, and has a partnership with universities across the UK where [spiking prevention materials such as posters and social media materials](#) are also used.

- [Guidance on spiking](#) – offering advice and support on what to do if you are spiked, or are with someone who has been, and where to get more information.

### Night Time Industries Association (NTIA)

- [Guidance on drink spiking](#)

### British Institute of Innkeeping (BII) posters

- [Staff Awareness Poster](#)
- [Guest Awareness Poster](#)

### "Ask for Angela"

Hospitality Ulster, in partnership with the PSNI want venues across Northern Ireland to help people enjoy even safer nights out in public spaces.

Ask for Angela is a support mechanism aimed at informing and educating hospitality industry staff about customer welfare and vulnerability. Through a code phrase that can be used by customers to discretely seek help, 'Ask for Angela' reassures customers that support is available. The code phrase is pointless without proper and straightforward training for your staff, so we've provided everything you need to get started.

Simply sign up using the form below, and access full training resources to ensure your staff are informed, and prepared to act if someone approaches them to 'Ask for Angela'.

A list of local venues who sign up will be kept on public record.

SIGN UP NOW TO ACCESS TRAINING MATERIAL: <https://hospitalityulster.org/askforangela>

### National Pubwatch

- A range of free [policy documents](#) including template drink spiking and vulnerable persons policies, developed in conjunction with [Best Bar None](#)
- E-learning module on [vulnerability awareness in the night time economy](#)
- ["Supporting Vulnerable People"](#) – short online film

### White Ribbon NI

White Ribbon NI have developed a 'Listen, Learn, Lead' toolkit, which offers simple ideas, inspiration, information, and resources to help organisations prevent violence against women and girls . It advises on possible courses of action, some changes that may need to be made and how organisations can upskill their staff. More information here

<https://www.whiteribbonni.org/>

### CPL Learning

- CPL Learning have provided free access to their online drink spiking awareness course for staff [here](#).

### Drinkaware

- [Information and guidance](#) on drink spiking
- An article about [navigating nightlife](#) which talks about drink spiking in the LGBTQ+ community

### Women's Night Safety Charters

Following the launch of a Women's Night Safety Charter by the Mayor of London, other regions and cities across the UK are starting to launch their own versions. We encourage members that operate in these locations to become signatories.

- Northern Ireland - [Women's Night Safety Charter](#)