

Scottish Government submission of 12 January 2024

PE1995/E: Improve support for victims of spiking

Thank you for your letter of 8 December in which you requested a written response from the Scottish Government to a number of points raised during the Committee's most recent consideration of Petition [PE1995: Improve support for victims of spiking](#).

Since our last response to the Committee on 1 June 2023, the Roundtable has met one further time. A meeting planned in October 2023 to discuss a potential pilot initiative being driven by The Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) within universities during the festive period was postponed due to timing issues, although a written update from members was requested and thereafter circulated to members for awareness prior to the festive period. The Roundtable is scheduled to meet again in early February 2024.

Since the last Roundtable in June 2023 a range of activity and initiatives are being progressed by the Scottish Government and operational partners including additional action required to increase vigilance during the summer/festival period, students returning to university in September and in the run up to the festive period. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Police Scotland's refreshed Bystander training to incorporate gender based violence issues including Ask for Angela Awareness, Spiking Toolkits and any other appropriate material.
- A significant amount of work has been done within the licensed trade in terms of training, protocols and provision to ensure those spaces are safeguarded.
- There is also an ongoing programme of work carried out around training, prevention, providing support, response and campaigns within Scottish universities to ensure information for students is accessible and that they understand what spiking is and how they can get help.
- Scottish Government officials met with The Night Time Industries Association (NTIA), Police Scotland and interested Scottish universities in November 2023, regarding a student pilot of anti-spiking "pods" – a compact kit containing anti-

spiking products. That meeting was a positive one, and further discussions are now taking place between NTIA and institutions with a hope that pilots can run early in 2024.

In your letter you highlight the roundtable session on drink and needle spiking hosted by the Education, Children and Young People's Committee. If my understanding is correct that session took place in January 2022 and as the Committee may be aware a number of those individuals and organisations that provided evidence at that time are members of the roundtable format, where the issues of safety and awareness raising form a key part of the discussions.

The successful coordination of communication and information sharing between Roundtable members in this format enables partners to be much better placed with regard to prevention and providing guidance on how to report and support incidents of spiking. The [Safer.Scot](#) webpages are updated on a regular basis by the Roundtable membership and are used as part of all our awareness raising.

With regard to making spiking a specific offence, Spiking can already be prosecuted under the common law offence of drugging, which is a broad offence covering all types of drink spiking. There is also a more specific statutory offence contained in section 11 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. I can confirm that we have no plans at this time to create a specific criminal offence of spiking however we keep all laws under review.

I would also refer the Committee to the official report from First Minister's Questions prior to recess – [Meeting of the Parliament: 21/12/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#) – where spiking was raised.

I hope that the information set out in this letter is helpful to the Committee.

Violence Against Women and Girls Justice Unit