

Spiking - Students' Union/Association Guidance

Following the release of the [national demands](#) from the Girls Night In campaign we have compiled some guidance for how students' unions/associations can improve their policies and procedures around spiking. If you have further queries, please email uniondevelopment@nus.org.uk

Ways people can report

People should have various ways to report an incident to venues, either at the time or afterwards that are simple and straightforward. Offer a range of reporting methods, for example: in person, email, phone, feedback form or app.

Consider how accessible these methods are to marginalised and disabled people and how you can make sure people trust these methods. For example, there may not be wide ranging trust of reporting to the police, therefore you might create a safe reporting mechanism within your SU/University which will not need the victim to report to the police.

Ways of reporting an incident should be clearly signposted, not only around the venue but also on the SU website and other high traffic areas.

Securitisation of venues

Whilst we are aware that is important to ensure our venues are secure, it is imperative to our values as a movement that they are safe for everyone. [Release](#) has provided the following guidance on securitisation of venues in response to spiking:

Whilst it is understandable that the initial response might be calls for more surveillance to reduce the risk of 'date-rape' drugs entering premises, the available evidence indicates that such a strategy can *increase* risk and harm.

The reports around needle-spiking are horrifying and must be properly investigated. However, some of the proposals to increase surveillance are known to create their own problems and their own dangerous consequences. We would strongly discourage students' unions and associations - as we expressed in our presentations during the recent SOS Students, Alcohol and Drugs Conference - from taking actions that include increasing formal surveillance measures such as the presence of drug sniffer dogs or an increase in the *searching* of students. These proposals are proven to be [ineffective](#) at deterring the consumption/carrying of illicit substances and are found to be harmful in terms of encouraging adaptations (e.g. pre-loading, rapid drug consumption to evade detection), which then results in an [increased likelihood of health harms, including overdose](#) - as well as an increased likelihood of criminalisation for people who use drugs.

As well as searches for drugs [rarely](#) being 'successful', evidence also suggests that increased searches would [disproportionately](#) impact students from ethnic minority backgrounds, despite no increased likelihood of drug [use](#). Such methods are incredibly invasive and intimidating, and the presence of sniffer dogs could also cause unnecessarily high levels of anxiety for already marginalised groups. These measures do not address the *underlying* issue, which is that we should all be able to go out and get home safely on our own, and know that help is available if we need it.

There are a number of harm reduction measures which universities, SUs, and venues *should* adopt that seek to protect individuals and may be beneficial in addressing the recent spiking concerns, including: (1) having clear policies around sexual violence, including believing victims and

supporting them in reporting to the police [should they choose to]; (2) ensuring people who commit any sexual harassment or behave aggressively are banned from premises; (3) enhanced staff training to help recognise individuals vulnerable from intoxication; (4) instructing staff not to *eject* individuals vulnerable from intoxication, but instead to seek medical care; (5) contacting medical staff/ambulance services in response to intoxication as opposed to police; (6) removing 'zero tolerance' stances/statements [to drugs/drug use], which we know from our own [research with University students](#) *deters* students from seeking medical attention for themselves/others (fearing formal repercussions/disciplinary action) in a potential crisis; and (7) providing transparent cups, cups with lids, and drug checking tests and services.

We would advocate that what is needed are safer environments, and that increased searches on entry to venues will only lead to a false sense of reassurance. Furthermore, given that the main drug used to commit sexual violence is *alcohol*, no matter how effective a 'door drug policy' is, and it is never that effective, it will not protect potential victims. Those who wish to target people on a night out will not be deterred by additional searches on the door, but by venues taking an active role in looking after their customers and minimising the opportunity to commit this violence. This creates a safer environment for everybody.

Creating a supportive and positive culture at your venues

All communicated information about spiking and/or harassment should avoid putting the responsibility of safety on the potential victim, but instead give clear information on some or all of the following: your zero-tolerance policy against spiking and harassment, clear and easy reporting mechanisms and the support victims can receive.

Make sure anti-tampering devices like bottle stoppers are available free to people at your venue, and that all unaccompanied drinks are disposed of – if drinks are not allowed on the dance floor or in smoking areas consider putting clear signage up around this.

Make use of your internal and external channels to communicate your zero-tolerance policy on spiking and harassment, and clear options for how and who to report this to.

Ensure your staff believe and support anyone who comes forward to report something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Make sure management support staff by encouraging belief and making this approach very clear in induction and training. Provide [specialised training for your staff](#) on being an active bystander, [alcohol vulnerability](#), sexual harassment and assault, with a focus on how to respond and intervene if incidents take place. Consider accreditation with one of the many schemes available to SUs (detailed in the Further Information section below).

Several SUs have various [volunteer or student staff teams](#) on busy nights that operate "safe spaces", promote positive messages and provide practical support like water and support getting home safely.

Check that all CCTV and lighting is functioning correctly and that any blind spots in your venue are mapped. Assess your provision of accessible and gender-neutral bathrooms. Consider commissioning a safety audit of your buildings and spaces and publish the findings online and in a printed form. Due to the disproportionate and negative impact on vulnerable groups, you may not want to include further CCTV provision or searches as part of your policy.

Related policies and procedures should be given to staff during induction and training, reviewed regularly and be made accessible and available on your website, staff intranet or handbook. Work with your institution support teams to make sure that support pathways include their services too.

Engage with your [local Girls Night in campaign](#) group by engaging in the campaign. Some students' unions are [closing their venues](#) in solidarity with the campaign and others are lobbying local nightclubs to improve their policies and procedures.

Trading Initiatives

Students' unions have always prioritised the welfare of their students which is why we run the free Best Bar None scheme which recognises, promotes and rewards the importance students' unions place on social responsibility.

The BBN scheme provides a framework for students' unions to follow and demonstrate their commitment to ensuring all students have access to licensed premises that promote responsible alcohol retailing and provide a safe venue to visit.

NUS offers several lines that cater for the low and no-alcohol customer. We're aware that a growing number of students' unions are looking to ensure their bar spaces are more inclusive and accessible to students who either don't drink or moderate their drinking.

Low or no-alcohol events also work well as stand-alone initiatives or are the perfect complement to national campaigns such as Alcohol Awareness Week and Dry January 2022.

Anti-Spiking Kits

Trading Support have negotiated the following deal for anti-spiking kits:

CYD – Check Your Drink Spiking Detection Kits 5 Pack

Cost price £3.63 per pack exc. VAT (Lower than buying direct from CYD)

Minimum Order Quantity **100 packs** so this has been listed as £363.00

Available from Albert Harrison - product code 59391Y.

The strips have two testing patches which detect GHB and Ketamine. The user simply places a drop of liquid onto each test patch and the test patch will change colour immediately if a drug is present. Both tests have been accredited - the ketamine test by a lab and the GHB by Strathclyde University.

Spike Stoppers – cap on free flow pourers

Cost price £2.45 per pack exc. VAT

Cases of 12.

Available from Alliance - product code CT017731.

Procedures and guidance around spiking for your venue

If you already have zero tolerance policies on harassment or drugs for your venues or events that do not reference spiking/drink tampering, consider updating them.

If your current harassment or safety policies for your venues don't include specific procedure after a report of spiking, consider updating them to include the following:

- Move or encourage the victim to move to a safe space

• Demonstrate belief and validate their experience

• If the person still has the suspect drink, ask if you can take it so it can be tested on the premises

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- Ensure a supply of testing strips are available at all times for this purpose but also available free over the counter
- If possible, try and prevent the victim from drinking more alcohol as this could lead to more serious problems
- Call an ambulance if their condition deteriorates, they collapse or are unconscious
- Don't let the person go home on their own. Don't let them leave the venue with someone they don't seem to know well or trust
- Ensure all reported incidents of sexual harassment or assault are recorded in compliance with data and confidentiality guidelines
- Outline the options available as per your policy and explain the victim can report this to the police – it is their choice
- All staff should be fully aware of how, by whom and within what timeframe any reports will be responded to and investigated.
- Make sure that signposting and further future support steps are contained within your report response

Further information and useful links

- Good Night Out Campaign – campaigning for safer nightlife, runs an accreditation scheme and delivers active bystander training created in collaboration with NUS <https://www.goodnightoutcampaign.org/students-union/>
- Best Bar None SUs – completely free scheme for all members <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/best-bar-none-2022>
- SOS in partnership with NUS: Alcohol, Drugs and Student Wellbeing Programmes <https://www.sos-uk.org/project/alcohol-drugs-and-student-wellbeing>
- Not on my Campus – a national student network to challenge sexual violence and promote a culture of consent www.notonmycampus.org.uk
- Drink aware – drinking spiking and date rape drugs <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/staying-safe-while-drinking/drink-spiking-and-date-rape-drugs/>
- Women's Night Safety Charter Toolkit – London-based voluntary charter with useful information for all venues on improving women's experiences in night time venues https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wncs_toolkit_final.pdf
- Further reading to widen knowledge of victim blaming - <https://decoloniseuom.blogspot.com/2020/06/resisting-carceral-feminism.html>
- SU examples of information pages on drink spiking:
 - Winchester <https://www.winchesterstudents.co.uk/spikeaware#drink%20spiked>
 - Cambridge <https://www.studentwellbeing.admin.cam.ac.uk/support-particular-issues/drink-spiking>

Useful NUS Support

[Union Development team](#) - for support on this issue.

[Jo Lowe](#) – get in touch for procedural support relating reporting, safeguarding and training on how to deal with suspected spiking incidents if required.

[Jo Heuston](#) – get in touch about brands, ranging, sampling and marketing support for non-alcohol spaces and incorporating non-alcohol ranges in to your bar spaces.

[Alison Inch](#) – get in touch to find out more about the Best Bar None scheme.

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Appendix 1

How to respond to a disclosure of harassment

(Taken from the Women's Night Safety Charter Toolkit, July 2019)

The person coming forwards has chosen you because they feel able to let you know about what has happened. Most people never speak up due to fear of being blamed or disbelieved, so the first thing you say is vital.

- Demonstrate belief (e.g. "Thank you for sharing what happened.")
- Validate their experience (e.g. "That is not okay.")
- Explain their options (e.g. "We have a policy here which is..." and "I'm going to see what I can do to help.")
- Check you've understood what you've been told
- Ask about any physical injuries or urgent needs

Then if necessary support the person in passing up to the relevant manager or team member to take this forward. Offer to separately summarise their story on their behalf if they would like you to.

Communicate

You're not alone! Tell a colleague when you are concerned about behaviour you've witnessed, no matter how minor it seems, as this prevents escalation.

Be an active bystander

Responding effectively to harmful behaviour can start with focussing your attention and support on the person being targeted. Check in with the person who you think is experiencing unwanted attention, for example by making small talk, eye contact or giving them a discreet signal. This gives them an option to divert the harasser's attention.

Record keeping

Record all incidents and reports, no matter how minor. This helps others to keep up to date with issues and repeated behaviours. Keep your notes clear and stick to facts not opinions. You can also ask for and record the name of any customer while they are on the premises, but they have the right to refuse to give this information. Remember your CCTV.

Don't hesitate to call 101 or 999 in an emergency. But remember, the targeted person may prefer not to speak to the police and should never be coerced into doing so. You will be assisting greatly by providing even general third-party intelligence to the police through 101, 999 or your local Safer Neighbourhood team.