

Written evidence submitted by the Mayor of Greater Manchester (SPI0042)

1. As the Mayor of Greater Manchester (GM) and chair of the GM Anti-Spiking Partnership, I am responding to the Home Affairs Committee call for evidence on Spiking.

Who we are?

2. As Mayor, I recently set up the GM Anti-Spiking Partnership to respond to and act on spiking. The Partnership comprises of myself, Sacha Lord the GM Night-time Economy Adviser, Greater Manchester Police (GMP), GM licensing, local authority partners, students, victims, campaigners (including the Manchester Night-In group), the Night Time Industries Association, bars and nightclubs. In GM we recognise that partnership working is essential in tackling this crime and getting to the root causes of why spiking occurs in the first place.

3. The purpose of the GM Anti-Spiking Partnership is to: -

- Tackle and prevent spiking across GM and deter perpetrators
- Provide the right welfare and support to victims of spiking and
- Keep people safe when they are out enjoying our night-time economy.

Why are we submitting evidence?

4. On 24 September 2021, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) launched its 10-year Gender-Based Violence Strategy. This included an extensive public consultation with women and girls who have personal experiences of gender-based violence. Street safety and safety at night was a key theme raised by women and girls in the consultation and a key aspect of the strategy that we are committed to tackling in GM alongside our work to challenge behaviours in boys and men.

5. The issue of spiking specifically has also been raised to me as Mayor by victims and campaigners.

6. On 27 October 2021 I attended the 'End Spiking Now' protest organised by the Manchester Night-In group with Sacha Lord, the GM Night-time Economy Advisor. The protest was attended by 1,000 people and highlighted the level of public concern on spiking. Off the back of this I formed the Anti-Spiking Partnership to respond to their concerns. Whilst the focus of the protest was spiking it was clear that safety and preventing harm to women and girls when out at night was being highlighted more widely during the protest. We believe that spiking needs to be tackled alongside wider predatory behaviour against women and girls.

Prevalence

7. Since September 2021, there has been a significant increase in reported incidents of drinks spiking to GMP.

8. In 2021 GMP received 6 reports of spiking in August, 57 in September, 143 in October, 146 in November and 82 in December. Suspected driving factors include the return of the student population and the opening of the night-time economy post lockdown. The increase in October to 143 from 57 in September (151%) also coincides with greater media coverage highlighting the issue resulting in increased reporting.

9. Nearly all recent reported spiking incidents happened in nightclubs or bars (from September 2021 onwards).
10. There were more spiking reports from busy bars and nightclubs that generally attract younger customers (age 18-24) and most reported incidents are from females.
11. Most reported incidents have come from the City of Manchester (around 90%) but this is reflective of the high concentration of licensed premises and young people in the city (Manchester city centre has 1,000 of the city regions 6,000 licensed premises and attracts visitors from across the city region and nationally, the city is also home to 100,000 students).
12. Most victims remain unaware of how they may have been spiked.
13. Reports of spiking (whether via drink or injection) that have been a precursor to other offences is low.
14. It is difficult to detect drugs spiking as the drugs often used, (for instance GHB) only remain in the bloodstream for a few hours.
15. Feedback from victims indicates that suspected spiking goes unreported, so the prevalence levels are likely to be higher than the reported figures. We have received feedback that some victims do not report suspected incidents to the police. This makes it difficult to say with any confidence how prevalent spiking is. Encouraging reporting of spiking and providing reassurance to victims that the crime will be taken seriously is essential.

How spiking should be prevented and addressed

16. Addressing the rise in reported spiking demands a partnership response. That is why we have set up an Anti-Spiking Partnership in GM.
17. Feedback from victims is that partners are not joined up, the guidance is not clear, and the response/service received is often inconsistent. The GM Anti-Spiking Partnership is therefore committed to:
 - Rolling out clear guidance to venues, bars, and nightclubs using the Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) resources. This outlines their responsibilities to victims. Our GM Night-Time Economy team are proactively working with the NTIA to ensure this guidance is adopted. We have some good examples of proactive behaviour by bars and nightclubs in adopting anti-spiking protocols as well as training staff to spot vulnerability and provide support. However, we need to ensure that this is consistent across all premises.
 - Rolling out spiking field testing kits to premises (£2 a kit) with a focus on areas with the highest reported incidents.
 - Working with victims, campaigners, and student unions to develop clear guidance for potential spiking victims to be promoted with at risk groups. We will also better promote what to do if people need help on a night out (for example, if they are separated from friends, had their phone/money stolen and can't get home). We will do this through a night-time guide outlining the support available including havens and welfare schemes that operate in key areas of the city. We are also looking to extend and better coordinate our night-time welfare schemes (Village Angels, St

John's Ambulance and Student Angels) to cover the hot-spot areas for reported spiking incidents and wider vulnerability.

- Working with GMP and key groups to encourage reporting of spiking and ensure that there is a joined-up response between the premises, the police and health services so that victims received the proper support and a consistent service.
- Working with local authority and licensing partners to act on premises that do not follow the guidance and who do not support victims.

18. In addition to the above, we recognise that spiking is part of a much wider pattern of predatory behaviour against women and girls during the night-time. GMP are therefore undertaking covert police operations in the city centre where there are large footfalls of young women and girls and in bars and nightclubs. This has prevented some serious crimes being committed against women and girls.

19. GMP also run Operation Range which provides a high visibility presence and engages with people in the night-time and safeguards the vulnerable.

20. I am leading our campaign aimed at boys and men that challenges behaviours. Our recent video #isthisOK? received more than 4 million views and we will continue to develop a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence and spiking.

21. We need a combination of enforcement and zero-tolerance of behaviours to prevent spiking from occurring in the first place.

22. The issue of spiking is complex and not easy to address through investigation alone and the recent spike in reports has not resulted in a rise in convictions. We need to understand what more can be done to convict people of this crime.

23. GMP have issued guidance to officers to maximise the evidence captured to increase convictions. Time is essential so the 'golden hour principles' should be applied as well as capturing Body Worn Video, CCTV and witness information at the scene. Forensics are key. The GMP process is as follows: -

- If the victim attends hospital make efforts to secure a blood sample.
- If the incident occurred within the last 24 hours, ask the victim to provide to 2 urine samples using the 'early evidence kits'
- If the incident occurred more than 24 hours ago then 1 urine sample is required.

24. In drugs spiking it is difficult to detect as the drugs often used, (for instance GHB) as these have extremely short-lives and may only remain in the bloodstream for a few hours. There are also limitations in relation to the use of field tests that need to be explored further. Field testing kits have been rolled out to high priority venues so victims may use them, but GMP does not provide them as part of the 'golden hour' response.

Our asks of government

25. Spiking is difficult to separate from wider safety at night issues and predatory behaviour. We know that 'trusted people' schemes that help people on a night out can prevent harm, increase welfare, and reduce demand on emergency services. Covert policing operations are also proving to be successful at tackling predatory behaviour and reducing harm. We

would welcome further safer streets and safety at night funding streams aimed at women and girls to help us tackle night-time safety and we ask that this funding be targeted on our cities and towns where there are high concentrations of licensed premises, young people, and vulnerability.

26. We also ask that the government engage with the Night Time Industry on a national messaging campaign, to raise awareness of this issue, identify cases of spiking, and communicate avenues of support.

Witnesses to the call for evidence

27. We can offer oral witnesses to the call for evidence from the GM Anti-Spiking Partnership. As Mayor I am willing to personally give evidence if available. Sacha Lord, the GM Night-time Economy Advisor would also be happy to provide evidence.

I hope that the above is considered by the Home Affairs Committee.

January 2022