

(SPI0043)

Written evidence submitted by the Trusted CCTV Improvement Project (SPI0043)

1. I happened to come across the oral evidence about 'spiking' presented to the HASC on the 12th January 2022.
2. If I may, I'd like to add a few comments to the evidence given, and suggest a number of points for consideration that may possibly be helpful in addressing the problem in 'Licensed Premises'.
3. Firstly, the following comments were made ...

Q12 ... Zara Owen "It happened in my leg, so to spot it would be insanely difficult for them, to go through CCTV and find it.
Q44 ... Helena Conibear: "Zara mentioned busy clubs where you have strobe lighting and people dancing. Capturing anything on CCTV is very difficult."
Q59 ... Helena Conibear: "there is a responsibility and a burden on the venues themselves to collect data, to have well-trained staff and to have CCTV footage. "
4. Given that spiking can be administered in many forms, it is indeed currently (and historically) difficult to spot using CCTV; however that observation is predicated on the assumptions that the CCTV has been deployed effectively and is being used correctly ... unfortunately both of those reasonable assumptions are seriously flawed.
5. By way of an example, Helena Conibear highlighted the issue of using security cameras in areas subject to strobe lighting.
6. As it happens, I produced an outline "Application Profile" on the use of CCTV in Licensed Premises back in 2011, and within it also addressed that specific point (document available if required).
7. If a normal security camera is set up in an area where strobe lighting is being used, it is unlikely to provide any significant benefit in terms of "Evidential Recording".
8. However, if an Infra Red (IR) camera is equipped with a filter that blocks out all the non infra red light (e.g. visible blue, green & yellow light etc.) an IR illuminator/s can then be used to 'black' light the area/s under observation, producing high quality black and white images without the annoying effects caused by the pulsed lighting. This technique also works particularly well in bars where low levels of visible lighting may prove challenging for some conventional CCTV cameras.
9. Whilst this simple technique dates back perhaps 40+ years, it is not known or understood by many working in the UK CCTV Industry, a sector which is mostly occupied by unregulated installers who are often not technically proficient in all aspects of the work they undertake.
10. Whilst Helena Conibear is absolutely correct in stating that "there is a responsibility and a burden on the venues themselves to collect data, to have well-trained staff and to have CCTV footage. ", it nevertheless cannot be assumed that the quality and effectiveness of CCTV will be anything more than rudimentary, given there are no mandatory standards, or indeed appropriate enforcement within the current premises licensing regime (as far as I'm aware).
11. It is also my understanding that CCTV is not a statutory obligation under current licensing provisions (possibly classed as a "volunteered condition" ..?), and if that is indeed the case, it should perhaps be considered as mandatory (with only very limited exceptions), particularly if more

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detailed and effective technical requirements are proposed, and are supported by robust enforcement through the licensing authority.

12. (absolutely not intended as a negative observation) I do not think Best Bar None or Pubwatch are entirely well positioned at present, to offer the necessary detailed technical guidance on this particular subject. That said, given better access to specialist CCTV information, they would no doubt be far better placed to offer more topic specific expert advice on using security cameras in this often challenging environment.

13. In terms of addressing the current concern of spiking (in all its various forms) as it occurs in Licensed Premises, I would suggest that the following key areas could be considered ...

14. Within the current Licensing regime, look to significantly improve technical and operational requirements for CCTV used on Licensed Premises. Personally I would much prefer to see mandatory CCTV Operational Standards (which I recently described more fully in my submission to the Home Office, in relation to the "Protect Duty" consultation).

15. In future look to apply a more robust deterrent strategy, where the on site use of CCTV is demonstrated to be far more effective at catching (and consequently prosecuting) anyone thinking of committing a spiking (or indeed any other) offence, than has previously been the case.

16. Apply a wider "Deterrence through Detection" (DtD) approach, so that effective use of CCTV is better publicised in news and media, to drive home the message that suspects can and will be identified and dealt with accordingly.

17. Support academic Criminologists in undertaking detailed research to measure the effectiveness over time, of utilising more 'advanced' CCTV techniques as part of a wider developed strategy, to address the threat posed by spiking in publicly accessible premises.

18. With regards to larger venues and premises which are experiencing particular issues relating to misuse of drugs and heightened incidence of spiking, by way of a naive suggestion, it may be worth considering some form of member / guest registration scheme, where high quality images of patrons are held on record, for the express stated purpose of matching against CCTV in the event of an incident being reported.

19. That would facilitate both easier recognition of victims, potential suspects and close proximity witnesses.

20. This could constitute part of a more comprehensive CCTV 'deterrent' approach, to dissuade anyone who may be considering committing an offence, to be clearly aware at the point of entry that sophisticated measures are in place to identify and prosecute any offenders, caught on the venue's 'state of the art' high resolution security cameras.

21. It also helps to demonstrate that there is a zero tolerance policy on spiking, and as a consequence should go some way towards making patrons feel more relaxed in a venue that is seen to take their welfare very seriously.

21. In conclusion, I should perhaps mention that within the remit of addressing the wider societal issue of Violence Against Women and Girls, I think more needs to be done in enabling far more effective use of CCTV, particularly in public places.

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22. I wish the committee well in their endeavours, and if any further comment is required, I am happy to assist where possible.

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