

Written evidence submitted by Geraint Davies MP (SPI0046)

Geraint Davies MP recommendations on Spiking to the Home Affairs Select Committee

[Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. Text in square brackets has been inserted where text has been redacted.]

- 1. Summary of actions** for stronger and more joined-up action to prevent spiking, to identify the crime, to help the victims and to catch and punish the perpetrators:-
2. Entry security to include scanners and bag-checks and detection wands that can pick up small needles.
3. Photo ID (e.g. provisional driving licence) plus phone number taken/scanned at the door with entry time similar to data gathered for Covid.
4. Signature of consent that CCTV evidence may be viewed by police and victims in any crime inquiry with a time limit for keeping records.
5. These databases of those at a club and CCTV records will act to deter & detect perpetrators and to protect & give confidence to potential victims.
6. Cup and bottle covers and drink and urine testing available at clubs.
7. High-definition low-light comprehensive CCTV surveillance
8. A check-list of best practice that clubs have to display issued by the local council to include safety and security measures above, so people can go where it's safest and venues understand that they will lose profit if they don't put the safety of their customers first.
9. Multi-agency collaboration to deliver action and an awareness campaign on social media plus with posters and information in clubs and amongst student and other communities together with the police, local authorities, health authority. Campaigns with design and content input informed by potential victims providing advice, reassurance and deterrence.

Rationale for recommendations including victim testimony

10. In November 2021 I held a virtual meeting with those who had first-hand knowledge of spiking offences in Swansea, either into drinks and or with needles, so they could tell their story in a safe space.
11. We need stronger and more joined-up action to prevent spiking, to identify the crime, to help the victims and to catch and punish the perpetrators.

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12. The meeting included shocking testimony from those who have been spiked in Swansea night clubs – including women and men who had had a drink or hadn't and were spiked with or without needles.

13. The men who go out with a needle and then inject someone are guilty of a pre-meditated stabbing with a poison with intent to disable then rape someone. This is a combination of horrific crime that is frequently happening and not being given the serious joined-up response it requires so women, in particular, are not safe.

14. One young woman said that she was spiked in the leg with a drugged needle on Saturday 13 November night in [nightclub A] and became dis-abled and unable to manage her own behaviour nor to remember exactly what happened. She is now traumatised. She had been left alone in the club as she was assumed to be drunk and says that she had little sympathy or help from nightclub staff or the police when she reported the incident. They simply assumed she was drunk. She believes she left and got re-entry into the club and believes that, as drunk people shouldn't be let in, she should have been helped not let back in. She woke with a bump on her leg the next day and went to hospital to eventually get blood tests then a jab for hepatitis B.

15. She said that in [nightclub A] they don't do bag checks or metal detection, like they do at [nightclub B], and they should look at the CCTV, let the victim study it and get the evidence to identify and charge the perpetrator. In addition, the CCTV internal coverage needs to be more comprehensive.

16. In general, there should be a check-list of best practice from searching and scanning on entry to CCTV surveillance, drink covers and on-the-spot testing so people can go where it's safest and venues must understand that they will lose profit if they cut corners on safety.

17. Another witness said that her sister, who does not drink for health reasons including diabetes and a heart condition, was also spiked in the back of the leg in [nightclub A] at about 9.00 o'clock. This resulted in her having a seizure that could have resulted in a cardiac arrest. Her legs collapsed and she was foaming at the mouth and taken out of the club in a wheelchair. 999 was called but the police were more focussed on the story than providing assistance, the paramedics weren't helpful, and the ambulance took three hours to arrive. As a result, an imminent hospital operation she had scheduled for was cancelled and her medical condition is such that she can't even string sentences together.

18. Diving licence ID, as in Liverpool, should be scanned at the door so that there is a database of those in a given club during a particular time to help to deter and detect this appalling crime of spiking. We need people entering to sign a declaration that CCTV may be viewed by prospective victims to identify crimes occurring and suspects with permission for victims to view.

19. We need greater awareness, with posters and information, cup covers and airport type scanning security. Fiction has scanners and bag-checks and we also need detection wands that can pick up small needles.

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20. A student union representative said that such spiking incidents were prevalent on student nights and that the police, licensing authority and health board should be more joined up and enable the university to provide better guidance. In November she said that there have been 50 incidents of students whose drinks have been spiked reported plus 20 to 30 injection cases in the past few weeks alone. These include at [nightclubs A, B, C and D].

21. A male student at a society event at [nightclub C] had a couple of drinks then suddenly felt awful so called his girlfriend to pick him up but when she arrived he didn't answer his phone and she found him semi-conscious on the pavement. She managed to get him home in the car and called A&E who said an ambulance would take a few hours so he was lifted into the car and taken to A&E. However, A&E was dismissive believing him to be drunk and sent him home when he had stabilised.

22. Spiking is a growing crime and it's important that the venues raise their game, the police take it with utmost seriousness - not saying to victims 'do you want this reported?' having been stabbed drugged and potentially raped - and that, despite the undeniable pressure our NHS is under, that victims are treated with the care and attention they deserve.

23. I have been meeting with the police who had claimed this was more perception than reality, together with the health authority and local authority to work together to drive out abuse and to lift detection and punishment of this appalling crime. The non-reporting or action by the police on the "she's probably drunk" assumption is a cultural and operational deficiency that needs correction and explains the gulf between police understanding and assumptions.

24. In Swansea the student community has lost confidence in the police and have started a self-help facebook group to get women back safely by night when it is contacted.

25. Sadly, this weekend there will be further victims of spiking in Swansea and we must all work together to combat it.

26. I will join the Reclaim the Streets March on Thursday 25th at 5.00 outside the Potters Wheel and speak in Castle Square Swansea afterwards.

Spiking Protest

27. I joined forces with students in protest outside Swansea [nightclubs A, B and C] against the wave of spiking in drinks and via needles that is reported from their premises.

28. We need better scanning, searches, CCTV, testing, protection and arrest of perpetrators who spike young women with intent to rape them in Swansea.

29. The police need to up game as there are reports of people debilitated after being spiked with drugs who are dismissed by the police as 'just drunk' when seeking help and protection. These women have been rendered highly vulnerable by misogynistic criminals who are out to rape them.

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30. During our march two men approached us to hurl abuse - one saying that feminists assume all men are misogynist rapists, which they of course don't, the other saying 'after drinking a bottle of whiskey what do women expect'. This level of misogynistic unapologetic ignorance underlines the danger on the streets from a minority of misguided men.

31. Education to cure misogyny takes time and, in the meantime, I'll be meeting with the police, health board and local authority to help to coordinate a more immediate response to their current dangers.

32. The police saying the rise in spiking is perception without evidence is woefully inadequate, in particular as we've had 70 cases reported to the student union in the last few weeks and I've taken many victim statements myself.

33. Similarly, the health board should not assume those presenting as having been maliciously drugged are 'simply drunk' and the clubs need to raise their game and put the safety of their clients, in particular women, before profits.

34. If we are to make our streets safe for women complacency must be replaced by focussed action."

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