

# **Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1995](#): Improve support for victims of spiking, lodged by Catherine Anne McKay**

## **Background**

The [petition](#) argues for the development of:

“a multi-agency approach to investigating spiking incidents to ensure victims are given access to appropriate testing and incidents are investigated robustly”.

The petitioner believes that a family member was spiked and that the police should have taken more action to investigate whether this had indeed occurred.

The term ‘spiking’ is generally used to refer to situations where:

- someone adds alcohol or drugs to another person’s drink without their knowledge or consent (‘drink spiking’)
- a needle is used to inject drugs into a person without their knowledge or consent (‘needle spiking’).

Spiking can be prosecuted under various offences. As well as being harmful in itself, it can leave a person more vulnerable to a range of offending behaviour.

## **Previous parliamentary consideration of spiking**

The Education, Children and Young People Committee held a roundtable evidence session on spiking at its [meeting](#) on 26 January 2022. The committee papers for that meeting provide [information on drink and needle spiking](#), including:

- written submissions from Police Scotland and Universities Scotland
- a SPICe briefing.

Police Scotland’s submission states that it “takes all reports of spiking seriously and your report will be fully investigated” (p 12).

The SPICe briefing includes information on relevant criminal offences. It notes that:

“Although there is no specific offence of drink or needle spiking, various offences may apply.

In seeking to respond to freedom of information requests for statistics in this area (discussed below), Police Scotland has provided figures relating to what it described as the two most potentially relevant crime classifications:

- the common law offence of drugging
- the statutory offence of administering a substance for sexual purposes”. (p 25-26)

The [official report](#) of the committee’s meeting is available online.

## Scottish Government

The Scottish Government’s [written response](#) (January 2023) to the petition comments on Police Scotland’s approach to reports of spiking, seeking to provide reassurance that all reports are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

In relation to the call for a multi-agency approach to investigating spiking, it states that:

“Throughout 2022 several round-table meetings have taken place to help steer the joint Scottish Government and public sector response to the act of spiking. The round-tables brought together partners from across the justice system including policing, victims organisations and prosecution in addition to representatives from higher and further education, community safety and night time economy.”

The Scottish Government has also responded to several parliamentary questions on spiking. For example:

- [S6W-07437](#) “To ask the Scottish Government whether it has hosted another roundtable event on actions taken to tackle spiking crimes following an initial meeting on 4 November 2021” – answered on 25 March 2022
- [S6O-01551](#) “To ask the Scottish Government what steps are being taken to highlight the risks of drink spiking as the Christmas party season approaches” – answered on 16 November 2022.

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31/01/2023

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

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