

Spiking warning over Christmas period

Female revellers are being warned against a surge in spiking with police chiefs reporting almost 100 drugging incidents in the first six months of the year.

Police Scotland say drugging crimes have stayed “at a far higher level” than they were historically, with 94 crimes recorded up to June.

The news comes as the UK Home Office is expected to announce plans to modernise spiking laws today after coming under pressure to make needle and drink spiking a specific offence, with campaigners and politicians calling for tougher action to protect women.

It will amend the Criminal Justice Bill and update the Offices Against The Person Act 1861 to make clear that spiking is illegal.

Women’s safety campaigners are urging women and girls to be vigilant over Christmas and New Year amid concerns over the rising number of incidents.

Dawn Fyfe, chief executive of Glasgow-based group Wise Women, said: “Wise Women would ask women to be vigilant for spiking, however, we fully expect a robust response from criminal justice to any reports of spiking over the festive period, or any other time.

“It is appalling that before women leave the house for

celebrations they have to consider how they will mitigate against the dangers of male violence.”

The Stamp Out Spiking charity warn that anyone who suspects they or their drink may have been spiked should seek help from friends or venue staff immediately and say 97.64% of spiking victims don't report it to the police.

Dawn Dines, the charity's founder and CEO, who has been campaigning for more than 20 years, said young women were often dismissed as drunk when they have in fact been spiked.

She said: “When someone is spiked they may become unsteady on their feet, have blurred vision and feel drunk very quickly and they need to ask for help as soon as possible. There is only a small window of opportunity to get help because you are going to become compliant very quickly and not be able to put up a fight.”

Ms Dines added: “Sticking a double in someone's drink is still a form of spiking and we need to have zero tolerance and that is why we welcome the laws being modernised by the Home Office.”

Spikings take place in venues such as pubs and clubs, as well as at private parties. As many as one in ten women across the UK are said to have been victims of spiking at some point.

The latest Police Scotland performance report says: “Police Scotland continually reviews the spiking communications toolkit to promote a consistent approach, reinforcing the importance of women and girls feeling and being safe in public places, whilst ensuring there is no ‘victim blaming’ culture.

“Partnership, Prevention and Community Wellbeing (PPCW) continue to work with the Business Crime Prevention Unit and Scottish Violence Reduction Unit on such things as ByStander awareness training to the licensing industry.”

Police Scotland has said that the majority of the 605 cases reported since 2021 involve young women aged between 17-26, with some having been sexually assaulted or put at risk of sexual assault.

Wise Women repeated their call for anti-spiking devices to be provided free to women and girls in a bid to protect them from predatory behaviour.

Anti-spiking covers are single use foil covers used with a straw designed to prevent drink drugging. Spiking detection kits are also available to test for two of the most common date rape drugs.

Ms Fyfe said: "It is extremely concerning that women have to pay for safety equipment to protect them from attempts to spike their drink."

According to Police Scotland, spiking investigations are complex by nature, with victims often reluctant to come forward for a variety of reasons, including that they may not be able to recall what has taken place and feel they won't be believed.

They warn that spiking, whether by adding drugs or alcohol to someone's drink, or by injection, without their consent, is a criminal offence.

Assistant Chief Constable Bex Smith said: "People should be able to go out for a night out without fear of being drugged.

"We are working with a range of partners, both locally and nationally, to ensure licensed premises are safe spaces for all, and this includes the continued delivery of ByStander Awareness training.

"We are also working in partnership with other emergency services, student bodies, universities/colleges and Third Sector organisations to raise awareness and provide support

for anyone affected.

“Every report of being ‘spiked’ either with a needle or in their drink is taken seriously and fully investigated. We would encourage anyone who believes they have had their drink spiked or been assaulted in this way to contact Police Scotland on 101 or in an emergency 999.”

