

Request Reference: 87A/23

1. The number of offences that were reported to the police as alleged drink spiking (including needling)

The following table shows the count of offences; Administering a substance with intent to commit a sexual offence, Assault with Injury - Administering poison with intent to injure or annoy, Attempted - Administering a substance with intent to commit a sexual offence, Attempted - Assault with Injury - Administering poison with intent to injure or annoy, where the incident summary field contains any of the keywords 'spike', 'spiked', 'spiking', 'needle' or 'needling':

TABLE 1

Year	Total
2017	0
2018	0
2019	25
2020	13
2021	143
2022	179

2. The number of alleged drink spiking offences that were investigated by the police

All offences in Table 1 above were investigated.

3. The number of offences that were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service

It is not possible to determine this information without manually reviewing each case from Table 1 above. Such a search however would exceed the appropriate limit and is therefore exempt by virtue of Section 12(1) of the FOI Act 2000.

4. The number of offences that were prosecuted

The following table provides the current outcome for all offences in Table 1 above. None have so far resulted in a charge:

TABLE 2

Outcome	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Blank/Ongoing	-	-	-	-	-	3
Evidential Difficulties - Victim Based - Named suspect not identified	-	-	-	-	8	25
Further action will be taken by another body	-	-	-	-	1	-
Investigation Complete: No suspect identified	-	-	24	12	120	126
Named Suspect identified: evidential difficulties prevent further action (no victim support)	-	-	1	1	5	15
Named Suspect identified: evidential difficulties prevent further action (victim support)	-	-	-	-	9	10
Grand Total	-	-	25	13	143	179

5. What measures or practices have been changed since October 2021 to facilitate reporting and to provide support?

Operation ARGON – The WMP response to spiking by needle, injection or via drink:

In October 2021 West Midlands Police (WMP) became aware of a noticeable increase in reporting from partner agencies, Night Time Economy Venues (NTE) and through community engagement of 'spiking offences'. Challengingly, no reports were being received by WMP which was assessed as being indicative of different barriers to reporting and a lack of confidence in the policing response.

In response, WMP developed a clear strategy which was supported by the Gold, Silver and Bronze command structures which aimed at delivering an enhanced service to support the Violence Against Women strategy and obtain a clear understanding of the issue. Additional supporting strategies were implemented for the primary response to reporting, forensic submissions and an overarching communications plan which included a proactive targeted campaign.

The approach led to a force-wide approach which increased confidence and credibility in the police response. The introduction of testing kits and the communications approach inspired reporting and allowed for the dissemination of strong Prevent and Protect messaging. A centralised investigation tracking systems led by the Force Intelligence department was key in capturing the wide variety of offences, geographies that were being impacted and the methods of reporting.

There are a number of steps that continue to be developed as part of the response to this crime type which include working with clinicians regarding Accident and Emergency data in order to obtain a fuller picture of incidents; evaluation from the National lead and subsequent presentation to the Home Affairs Select Committee with respect to forensic and reporting challenges experienced by all forces; development of licensee support for in-venue drink testing and the promotion of a culture of ownership by venue management.

Additional Links:

<https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/campaigns/safer-nights>

<https://twitter.com/wmpolice/status/1446962662378774528?lang=en-GB>