

**RAPE  
CRISIS  
SCOTLAND**



**Drug Assisted  
Sexual Violence**

## Rape Crisis Scotland

The **Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline** offers initial and crisis support and information on the phone and by email for anyone aged 13 or over who has been affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened.

It is free and confidential.

The **helpline** supports survivors of stalking and can also put you in touch with local Rape Crisis Centres or other services for ongoing support. There is a minicom for deaf or hard of hearing people and we can arrange for language interpreters if your first language is not English.

**08088 01 03 02**

## The extent of the problem

In recent years there has been increasing mention of drug assisted rape and sexual assaults. Using drugs and alcohol in order to make a person more vulnerable to sexual violence is not new, but there has been a significant increase in the range and availability of drugs which are tasteless, odourless and hard to detect.

It is difficult to know the real extent of the problem due to under reporting and the speed with which substances leave the body before they can be detected. Callers to the Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline as well as to local centres tell us that there are significant numbers who have experienced this, both at home and abroad.

## Alcohol and drug use

Alcohol is still the main 'drug' used in drug assisted sexual violence. This is where other stronger drinks are added or larger measures given to drinks without that person's knowledge. This part of 'spiking' is often overlooked and may be one reason for the lack of other drugs showing up in any tests carried out.

Survivors are often afraid to tell for fear of being blamed because they had been drinking or had taken recreational drugs beforehand. It is important to stress that no matter whether alcohol or drugs were taken through choice or not, the responsibility for the sexual violence always lies with the perpetrator.

Whilst there is a public perception that drug assisted rape happens in pubs and clubs and is carried out by unknown attackers, it can also happen in the home, the workplace or elsewhere, by people known and trusted. It is not just a problem in urban areas and it is not only alcoholic drinks which can be spiked. It is also not only women who can be spiked as men can also be targeted whether for sexual violence or for other motives such as robbery.

## The drugs involved

In general, apart from alcohol, the drugs which are used to spike drinks are sedatives. These are even more powerful and dangerous when combined with alcohol.

The drugs used can take effect very quickly and the effects can last for hours. Probably the most well known drug is Rohypnol, although there is no evidence to suggest that this is widely used in the UK. There are however a whole range of other prescription drugs and illegal substances which have been used including ketamine, temazepam, valium, GBL and GHB.

## If you have been affected

One of the most common side effects is amnesia where you may not be able to remember what happened. You may have injuries to your body which suggest that an assault has taken place but you are unable to recall the nature of the attack. This can make reporting very difficult as much of the story may be lost or confused.

Emotionally this can also be difficult to come to terms with. Not knowing what or all of what has happened, having gaps in events, possibly not knowing who was involved or where you were taken can make the healing process more difficult and leave you with unanswered questions.

## The effects

Depending on the drug the effects vary but can include:

- amnesia (memory loss)
- drowsiness
- impaired/poor judgement
- slurred speech
- nausea and/or vomiting
- disorientation & confusion
- poor balance and co-ordination
- aggression
- decrease in inhibitions
- decreased sense of reality
- hallucinations
- numbness
- paralysis

Many of the above are also common after drinking alcohol so it can be difficult to tell the difference. The combination and amount of drugs, mixed with alcohol can have serious health implications and can even be life threatening so it is important to seek medical advice if you have any concerns.

## Reporting to the Police

If you feel you might have been raped or sexually assaulted and you do want to involve the Police it is important to do this as soon as possible as traces of drugs can leave your system very quickly, along with other forensic evidence. This varies depending on the drug, some will leave no trace after 12 hours, others 48. The Police may want to take blood, urine and hair samples as well as a forensic examination specific to rape or sexual assault.

Support workers at the RCS helpline are there to support you whether or not you wish to talk about the possibility of reporting. They can send you out our information leaflet on **Police and Legal Advice** for further information on what to expect if you are considering making a report.

If you decide you do not want to involve the Police you may have questions about services and support to look at your safety, treatment for injuries, accessing sexual health screening or emergency contraception. The RCS Helpline can offer you an opportunity to discuss these aspects as well as to access emotional support.



## Impact on you

Sexual violence can impact on us in a variety of ways and everyone is affected differently. There is no 'normal' way to react and support can offer you a space to talk about and help make sense of how you are feeling. Our information leaflet **Rape & Sexual Assault** gives more information on some of the common effects and can be sent out or talked through by our support workers.

What can make your experience more difficult is where little memory is left. You may have other evidence to suggest something has happened, such as bruises or bleeding or you may find yourself somewhere or with someone you do not know. You may find yourself going over and over what happened, or torturing yourself with thoughts of what might have taken place. For attacks that happened some time ago, you may have started recalling fragments of memory, this can be equally distressing and it can help to seek support.

While support may not answer all your questions about gaps in your memory it is important you know that support is available. Rape Crisis Scotland's Helpline can offer support, whether you have any clear memory or not, whether it happened recently or some time ago. They will not define what has happened but will offer you a space to talk, to explore how you feel and offer information on additional supports and services.

**Remember, you are not to blame and you deserve to be safe, listened to and to have the support you need.**

If you or someone you know has been affected by any form of sexual violence no matter when it happened please call the free and confidential

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline on

**08088 01 03 02**

or contact our email support service on

**support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

Trained female support workers are there to offer support and information, and can let you know about support in your area.

### Local Rape Crisis Centres

Aberdeen:

**01224 620 772**

Argyll & Bute:

women **0800 121 46 85**

men **0800 032 0399**

Central Scotland:

**01786 471 771**

Dumfries & Galloway:

**01387 253 113**

Dundee:

**01382 201 291**

East Ayrshire:

**01563 541 769**

Edinburgh:

**0131 556 9437**

Fife:

**01592 642 336**

Glasgow:

**0141 552 3200**

Lanarkshire:

**01698 527 003**

Perth & Kinross:

**01738 630 965**

Scottish Borders:

**0800 054 2445**

Western Isles:

**01851 709 965**