

Harsher sentences introduced for 'spiking' drugs

GHB, a drug that is used to spike drinks, has been reclassified as a Class B drug today (13 April) along with two related substances, GBL and 1,4-BD, meaning that those found in possession of them will face tougher penalties.

From today, those found in unlawful possession of these drugs face sentences of up to five years behind bars, while those involved in supply and production will face up to 14 years in prison.

GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid), gamma-butyrolactone (GBL), and 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD) have been found to facilitate serious crimes, including murder, rape, sexual assault and robbery. These tougher sentences recognise the harms these drugs do and are expected to deter possession and supply, so that the public are better protected from criminals.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

These drugs have been used to commit too many heinous crimes and it is right that sentences for those caught in possession of them reflect the damage they do.

I welcome the tightening of restrictions around these dangerous substances, introducing tougher penalties for possession sends a clear message to those who think they can get away with using it.

These changes will help ensure the people of Britain are kept safe and that we continue to tackle drug misuse and crime in all its forms.

Former Love Island contestant, Sharon Gaffka, was found unconscious in a toilet cubicle by her friends in July 2020 while out for lunch. She has no memory of the incident but her friend, who is a doctor, believed she was a victim of spiking. Thankfully Ms Gaffka recovered from the event but too much time had passed by the time she left hospital for any evidence to be gathered as to what she had been spiked with.

Ms Gaffka is now leading a campaign to boost awareness of the dangers of drink spiking, of which GHB is suspected to be one of the most commonly used drugs, with the support of her local MP, David Johnston.

Member of Parliament for Wantage, David Johnston, said:

Spiking – and the fear of spiking – has been a blight on people trying to enjoy a night out with friends and family for too long.

The changes announced today are an important step towards ensuring that those who prey on people in order to try and take advantage of them are given the punishments they deserve.

For the police and Border Force, this change will support their ongoing efforts to tackle spiking.

The National Police Chiefs' Council lead for drugs, Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, said:

We know that GHB is used by perpetrators to commit sinister crimes, including spiking, and we recognise the horrible impact these incidents can have on victims. As such, we are supportive of this change, which ties in with our ongoing coordination of the national policing response to needle spiking.

We continue to work with our law enforcement partners, including the National Crime Agency (NCA), to ensure there is a coordinated, national response to the supply of these types of drugs. If you have any information on the supply of these drugs, please report it to your local force or you can report anonymously via Crimestoppers.

The Home Secretary asked the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) to expedite a review of controls on these drugs in January 2020 after becoming concerned about their use by criminals.

Following the recommendations by the ACMD, these drugs have now been moved from Class C to Class B under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971), which has been welcomed by non-profit charity Stamp Out Spiking UK (SOS UK).

The charity was founded by Dawn Dines in 2019 to tackle the increasing incidents of drink spiking in the UK, as well as supporting victims of spiking.

Dawn Dines, CEO and founder of Stamp Out Spiking, said:

After nearly two decades campaigning against this crime I feel some sort of justice will be felt by the numerous victims of the disgusting crime. I recall young men and women breaking down, sharing their experiences.

Even though it's too late for those victims, this is going to help so many more people in the future.

We are delighted that the Home Secretary is giving a clear and concise message by the reclassification of the drugs used and that there is zero tolerance of this cowardly crime in our society.

The government will continue to tackle drug misuse as announced as part of the 10-year Drug Strategy, [From Harm to Hope](#), ensuring an even tougher response to criminal supply chains and the demand that fuels these illegal and violent markets, as well as supporting people through treatment and recovery.

[Russia's invasion of Ukraine: UK welcomes OSCE Moscow Mechanism independent expert report](#)

Mr Chair, I wish to make a statement in my national capacity, to supplement the statement just delivered by Ambassador Stelian Stoian from Romania on behalf of [the 45 participating States, including the UK, that invoked the Moscow Mechanism, with the support of Ukraine](#).

I would like to welcome Professors Wolfgang Benedek, Veronika Bílková and Marco Sassòli to the Permanent Council today and thank them for their professional and meticulous work in preparing this report. We greatly appreciate that we have, collectively, been able to call on your expertise, and independence, in preparing this important report.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom strongly supported the joint decision to invoke the Moscow Mechanism. We did so because of our grave concerns about the humanitarian impacts of Russia's invasion and the potential for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Since the invocation of the Mechanism on 3 March, we have spoken regularly in this Council about some of the truly shocking incidents that have come to light. We have spoken about the events in Mariupol, Bucha, Irpin, and Borodyanka. Earlier this week, [we expressed our horror about the tragic events in Kramatorsk](#): missile strikes on a crowd, reported to be over a thousand people, waiting for trains to escape Russia's onslaught. Over fifty people – innocent civilians – women, men, and children – reportedly killed in this barbaric attack, and over 100 injured.

The report presented today by Professors Benedek, Bílková and Sassòli makes clear that we, and the wider international community, were right to invoke the Moscow Mechanism in response to our concerns about Russia's invasion. We read in the report about the human impact directly caused by Russia's actions – in sections covering deportations, sieges and humanitarian corridors, on targeted attacks on individual civilians and civilian infrastructure, and on the impact on vulnerable groups. The sections on two specific attacks, against the Mariupol Maternity House and Childrens' hospital, and Mariupol Theatre, remind us in detail of the terror of what is still happening – today – to that city's inhabitants, and the cost of Russia's aggression.

Mr Chair,

The report covers incidents between 24 February and 1 April. It does not cover the most recent atrocities in Ukraine, although we note the authors' comments that Bucha "deserves and requires a serious international enquiry". This report, the first independent report under the auspices of an international organisation, is important. It confirms our concerns, including "clear patterns of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations by the Russian forces in their conduct of hostilities."

This report is just the first of likely many. We must, as an international community, hold accountable those responsible for the atrocities that have been committed in Ukraine, including military commanders and other individuals in the Putin regime. Soldiers and commanders who issue or follow illegal orders need to understand that their actions will be documented, and they will be held to account. Justice will be served.

Mr Chair, we may hear today from the Russian Delegation. If so, we can probably expect the usual distortions, denials and disinformation. But, as we have said before – facts matter. That is precisely why a large majority of participating States, with the support of Ukraine, asked for this fact finding mission. It is with the facts that we can ensure accountability for all those that violate International Humanitarian Law.

We call on Russia in the strongest possible terms to end its attacks on civilians in all their forms, to pull back their troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and to stop this war. The United Kingdom will remain resolute in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity within its internationally recognised borders.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine: joint statement on the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report

Mr. Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of 45 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union Member States.

Mr. Chairperson,

On Tuesday, April 12, 2022, OSCE participating States received the

independent experts' report of the Moscow Mission to address the human rights and humanitarian impacts of the Russian Federation's invasion and acts of war, supported by Belarus, on the people of Ukraine, within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. The mandate for the experts was to:

Establish the facts and circumstances surrounding possible contraventions of OSCE commitments, and violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law

Establish the facts and circumstances of possible cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including due to deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure; and to collect, consolidate, and analyse this information with a view to presenting it to relevant accountability mechanisms, as well as national, regional, or international courts or tribunals that have, or may in future have, jurisdiction.

[Our collective invocation of the Moscow Mechanism on March 3, 2022](#), with the support of Ukraine, reflected our shared concerns about the impact of Russia's invasion. Unfortunately, the report from the independent experts confirms our fears.

While our capitals and delegations are still reviewing the 99-page report in detail, we would like to highlight a number of critical determinations made by the experts in the report's Executive Summary.

1. "The Mission found clear patterns of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations by Russian forces in their conduct of hostilities"
2. "If they (Russia) had respected their IHL obligations in terms of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack and concerning specially protected objects such as hospitals, the number of civilians killed or injured would have remained much lower."
3. "Much of the conduct of Russian forces displayed in the parts of Ukraine it occupied before and after 24 February 2022, including through its proxies, the self-proclaimed 'republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk, violates IHL of military occupation"
4. The report has found "credible evidence suggesting that such violations concerning even the most fundamental human rights (right to life, prohibition of torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment) have been committed, mostly in the areas under the effective control of Russia or entities under overall control of Russia"

Furthermore, there are strong indications that crimes against humanity committed by Russian forces may have occurred pursuant to widespread or systematic attacks directed against a civilian population, with the report stating:

5. “some patterns of violent acts violating International Human Rights Law (IHRL), which have been repeatedly documented in the course of the conflict, such as targeted killing, enforced disappearance or abductions of civilians, including journalists and local officials, are likely to meet this qualification. Any single violent act of this type, committed as part of such an attack and with the knowledge of it, would then constitute a crime against humanity.”

In terms of recommendations for additional actions, the report states that:

6. “The report can inform other bodies’ more in-depth investigations into legal accountability. The findings may also contribute to establishing political accountability.”

Mr. Chairperson,

We appreciate that Ukraine has expressed its gratitude to the Mission of Experts for the “tremendous work accomplished”. We would also like to thank Professors Benedek, Bilkova, and Sassoli for their tireless work in preparing this report in such a short period of time. As stated, this report will require careful consideration and study, in the OSCE region and beyond. The broad conclusions, however, are clearly and compellingly presented. It is now upon the participating States and the international community to ensure that we undertake the necessary actions. That includes follow-up in the OSCE through the further use of its human dimension tools and mechanisms.

Thank you Mr Chair, and I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

[Government awards nearly £2 million to innovative transport proposals](#)

- creative entrepreneurs awarded share of £1.95 million to revolutionise UK’s transport network
- projects include technology to protect public transport systems from extreme weather conditions and proposals to reduce carbon emissions from HGVs
- government-backed projects will help support a greener and more efficient transport future, as UK drives towards net zero targets

Entrepreneurs and innovators pioneering new ways of creating a more efficient transport system are being backed by government funding announced today (13 April 2022).

In total, 51 projects have been awarded a share of £1.95 million in Department for Transport (DfT) funding as part of the government’s [Transport](#)

[Research and Innovation Grant \(TRIG\) programme](#), the largest number of projects backed in the programme's history.

One winner, Makesense Technology Ltd, will develop a technology to guide visually impaired people through the public transport network. A handheld device will scan the area and provide touch feedback, such as a vibration to the tablet holder, alerting them to any obstacles and their direction of travel.

AJEA Products Ltd is also among those awarded funding, creating autonomous flood protection for critical transport infrastructure. It will design self-deploying barriers that can be installed at train stations across the UK and pop up automatically when floods are detected, preventing passenger journeys from being disrupted by extreme weather.

Meanwhile, Unitrove Innovation Ltd is being backed to develop a control system for the world's first liquid hydrogen fuel container facility for zero emission ships (as seen in the image above).

The University of Cambridge is developing a new low-cost and lightweight steering system for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), which will reduce tyre wear, reduce carbon emissions and make it easier for larger vehicles to manoeuvre on the road.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said:

Innovation funded as part of TRIG could be the key to unlocking a more efficient and safer transport system for tomorrow.

I support the ingenious ideas of this year's cohort every step of the way and wish the successful applicants all the very best. I look forward to seeing the ideas develop to boost our green agenda and create high-skilled jobs across the UK.

Now in its 11th round of funding, the TRIG programme, delivered in partnership with [Connected Places Catapult](#), brings together talented start-ups – mainly SMEs and universities – and policymakers at the earliest stage of innovation to help enhance the UK's transport system.

Since launching in 2014, over £6 million in grants has supported more than 200 TRIG projects.

This year, the programme focused on increasing the diversity of its applicants. From Southampton to the Shetland Islands, the winning projects are based across the UK and reflect DfT's commitments to levelling up.

The winners were selected based on 4 key themes:

- maritime decarbonisation
- future of freight
- COVID-19 recovery

- transport resilience

An open call, where any transport related idea was also considered.

For the first time, 6 Future of Freight grants worth £100,000 each were piloted for larger projects, moving them past 'proof of concept' and towards being demonstration ready. These will complement remaining 45 grants of up to £30,000 each, spread across all 4 themes.

DfT will also be working in partnership with Connected Places Catapult this year to pilot an Innovation Accelerator Programme, which will support companies at a later stage in their innovation journeys. The programme will provide funding to help projects take the last step towards the market by providing bespoke training from industry experts.

Rachel Gardner-Poole, Connected Places Catapult, Chief Operating Officer said:

TRIG is a one-of-a-kind programme. It provides a mechanism to identify and support early-stage innovation that might slip through the nets of traditional funding routes.

Connected Places Catapult is extremely proud to deliver TRIG 2021, which is supporting over 50 innovators across 4 different challenges, including the future of freight, maritime decarbonisation, COVID-19 recovery and resilient transport systems. I am excited to see what great products and services arise.

[Agreement with major developers to fund building safety repairs](#)

- Major homebuilders accounting for half of new homes pledge to fix all unsafe tall buildings they have had a role in developing
- More than £2 billion committed by over 35 developers to make buildings safe
- Extension to the Building Safety Levy will raise a further estimated £3 billion forcing industry to pay and protecting innocent leaseholders

The government has today (13 April 2022) revealed a wide-ranging agreement that will see industry contribute £5 billion to address the building safety scandal.

In a victory for leaseholders, Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove has agreed a solution with the housing industry that will see developers commit a

minimum of £2 billion to fix their own buildings. Industry will also pay up to a further £3 billion through an expansion to the Building Safety Levy.

Under the new agreement, which will become legally enforceable, over 35 of the UK's biggest homebuilders have pledged to fix all buildings 11 metres+ that they have played a role in developing in the last 30 years.

For the companies yet to make the pledge, the Secretary of State has also confirmed there is little time left for them to sign up, and that those who continue to refuse will face consequences if they fail to do so.

As set out in January, a new government scheme will also see industry pay to fix buildings where those responsible cannot be identified or forced to in law. This follows previous confirmation that plans for a 30-year loan scheme paid for by leaseholders would be scrapped.

The new scheme will be funded through an extension to the Building Safety Levy that will be chargeable on all new residential buildings in England. This is expected to raise up to an additional estimated £3 billion over ten years from developers and ensure no leaseholder in medium-rise buildings faces crippling bills, even when their developer cannot be traced.

New proposed laws, announced in February under the Building Safety Bill, will ensure qualifying leaseholders are protected from the costs of historical building safety defects, including total protection against cladding costs. Today's deal establishes that the industry responsible – not innocent leaseholders – will pay.

Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove said:

Today marks a significant step towards protecting innocent leaseholders and ensuring those responsible pay to solve the crisis they helped to cause.

I welcome the move by many of the largest developers to do the right thing.

But this is just the beginning. We will do whatever it takes to hold industry to account, and under our new measures there will be nowhere to hide.

The pledge published by government today commits developers who have signed up to legally binding contracts, and to implement their promises as soon as possible.

The detailed agreement confirms developers will:

- Act as quickly as possible to fix buildings
- Implement new proportionate guidance on building safety
- Regularly report to leaseholders and government on their progress
- Respect an independent dispute resolution process established by

government; and

- Refund money already received from the taxpayer to fix their buildings.

More information on how government plans to enforce the agreement in law will be released in due course.

The government is introducing new powers that could be enforced on a developer should they breach the agreement, as well as on any remaining companies who fail to sign up. These new powers would allow the Secretary of State to block those who refuse to sign from building and selling new homes.

The government is clear that building safety is an industry wide issue. Cladding and insulation manufacturers are yet to accept their share of responsibility and come forward with a proposal. The Secretary of State has also today written to the Construction Products Association and warned he will do whatever it takes to hold cladding and insulation manufacturers to account.

Today's announcement follows a statement from Mr Gove in January, when he set out a 4-point plan to reset the approach to building safety and give leaseholders more protection against unfair costs.

The Building Safety Levy will be chargeable on new residential buildings of all heights – see [clause 57](#) in the Building Safety Bill.

Leaseholders will be contacted by their developer in due course to confirm whether their building is covered.

The Building Safety Bill includes far reaching provisions to protect qualifying leaseholders, in law, from the costs associated with historical building safety defects. Qualifying leaseholders are those living in their own homes or with up to three UK properties in total in medium and high-rise buildings.

The Building Safety Bill will also give government, regulators, and leaseholders and others new ways to hold to account companies that fail to do the right thing. More information is available [here](#) and further details on these measures will be announced in due course.