# Resource pack for venues

Making your venue safer for LGBTQ+ customers

This pack is for pubs, bars, clubs, cafés and arts venues in Exeter. It brings together existing guidance from Devon & Cornwall Police, Exeter's Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) Charter Toolkit and Best Bar None, with an LGBTQ+ lens.

## Why this matters

- LGBTQ+ people are almost twice as likely to report having experienced drink spiking: 17.8% compared with 10.6% (Drinkaware).
- 52% of LGBTQ+ people say they do not feel safe travelling at night (Galop / London TravelWatch).
- LGB+ people say they would go to bars and pubs (36%) and nightclubs (30%) more often if they felt safer (YouGov).

## 1. Have a spiking plan that every shift knows

**Remember:** victims are never to blame, and reports should always be taken seriously.

### Signs to look out for

According to NHS guidance, signs of spiking can include:

- suddenly seeming very drunk
- dizziness
- tiredness
- difficulty walking or moving
- feeling or being sick
- seeing things that aren't there
- problems with vision, such as blurred vision
- paranoia, a feeling of fear or distrust of others
- confusion
- memory loss

The signs often look like someone has had too much alcohol.

### What to do

- Call **999** if the person is unwell, unresponsive or in danger.
- Report suspected spiking to the police using the online spiking form or by calling **101**.
- Staff can report on someone else's behalf, and it doesn't matter when the spiking happened.
- Report as soon as the person is safe. This gives the best chance of collecting evidence.
- The police say people won't get in trouble for reporting spiking if they had knowingly taken illegal drugs.
- The UK Government has spiking guidance for venues, including what to do if someone has been spiked.

**Our recommendation**

- Believe the person. Don't assume they are "just drunk".
- Don't ask someone who may have been spiked to leave on their own. Keep them somewhere safe, with a friend or a member of staff.
- Keep the drink or glass if you can, note the time, and save the CCTV.
- Write every incident in your log.

## 2. When someone tells you something has happened

The SWaN Charter Toolkit suggests this way to respond:

1. **Believe:** "Thank you for sharing what happened."
2. **Validate:** "That is not okay."
3. **Explain their options:** "We have a policy here, which is..."
4. **Check** you've understood, and ask about any injuries or urgent needs.

The toolkit also advises:

- Keep the number of people they have to speak to as small as possible.
- Record every incident, however minor. Stick to facts, not opinions.
- Never pressure anyone to speak to the police. You can still pass general information to the police on 101.
- Devon & Cornwall Police record crimes motivated by hostility to someone's sex or gender as hate crimes.

Crimes motivated by hostility to someone's sexual orientation or transgender identity can also be reported to the police as hate crimes. Galop, the UK's LGBT+ anti-abuse charity, offers support on **0800 999 5428**.

## 3. Show people they're welcome

The SWaN Charter Toolkit's advice on safety messaging:

| Do | Don't |
|---|---|
| Use positive language, for example "We aim to create a welcoming space for all our customers". | Use graphic images. |
| Say what happens to people who behave badly, for example "You will be asked to leave". | Use humour or sensational language about these offences. |
| Explain why it isn't okay: "No one should feel unsafe while they are here." | Scaremonger or describe victims or perpetrators. |
| List the ways people can report a problem. | Use victim-blaming language, such as telling people to stay with their friends. |

### Our recommendation

- Make your message explicitly LGBTQ+ inclusive, for example: "Everyone is welcome here. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia will not be tolerated."
- Offer several ways to report a problem: in person, by phone, by email or with a form.

## 4. Train your staff

The SWaN Charter Toolkit recommends training every public-facing team member to respond to reports of harassment, and to record incidents properly. The Home Office's 2024 evaluation of the Safety of Women at Night Fund found that training improved night-time workers' awareness, their confidence to support victims and their ability to step in.

**Our recommendation**

- Make sure bar, door and toilet staff know that anyone can ask for help, whatever their gender or sexuality.
- Don't assume who is a couple. Two men or two women together may be partners.
- At the door, check ID by the photo and date of birth. Don't comment on someone's gender.
- For searches, ask customers which gender of staff they would prefer.

## 5. Design your space for safety

From the SWaN Charter Toolkit (Pledge 7):

- Check that all CCTV and lighting work properly.
- Think about whether people can move around and leave easily.
- Designate a quiet space where someone can get help or recover.
- Spread staff, including security, evenly across your venue.
- Look at your provision of accessible and gender-neutral toilets.

## 6. Make help easy to find

- **Ask for Angela** runs in many Exeter venues. Police carry out spot checks on it in the city.
- Display the **CCTV Control Room number: 01392 665008**. Exeter City Council has put yellow "Need Help" signs near CCTV cameras in the city centre.

- Tell customers about **Exeter Safe Space** at St Stephen's Church, High Street. It offers free first aid, water, phone charging and a safe place to wait on selected nights.

## 7. Join the schemes that already exist

| Scheme | What it is |
|---|---|
| Best Bar None | A national accreditation scheme supported by the Home Office. It assesses venue management, staff training and care, customer safety and welfare, and customer service and community. Accreditation lasts a year, and every accredited venue gets a personalised report with ideas to improve. In Exeter, accredited venues display maroon Best Bar None plaques, and Ask for Angela also operates in them. |
| SWaN Charter | A voluntary pledge to take practical steps on women's safety at night in Exeter. The charter defines women as anyone who identifies as a woman. See the seven pledges, toolkit and booklet. |
| Safer Exeter | Exeter's Community Safety Partnership. |
| Community Alcohol Partnerships | A national organisation that supports local partnerships to reduce alcohol harm among children and young people. |

### The SWaN seven pledges

1. **Change the conversation:** keeping women safe is everyone's responsibility.
2. **Champion:** appoint someone to drive change.
3. **Communicate:** run positive messages online and in your space.
4. **Support your staff:** create clear ways for staff to report unacceptable behaviour.
5. **Support the public:** create clear ways for customers to report unacceptable behaviour.
6. **Training:** train staff to respond to and record incidents.

7 **Designing for safety:** audit and adapt your spaces.

## 8. Look after people beyond the bar

Devon & Cornwall Police say evening anti-social behaviour in Exeter fell by 16% in 2025, compared with 2024. They credit partnership working, drug patrols in nightclubs, spot checks on Ask for Angela, and more non-alcoholic drinks in venues.

### Our recommendation

- Stock a good range of non-alcoholic drinks.
- Share safe ways to get home: taxi numbers, night buses and the Safe Space.