

Hughes Hall College Bop, 26th November 2021: results of the College investigation into the event

Introduction

Following a College 'bop' (student party organised by the College's student body representatives, the MCR) on Friday 26th November 2021, there were reports of an alleged spiking incident (three students reported being injected without their knowledge) as well as reports of sexual harassment behaviour at the event. These reported incidents, which are very serious in nature, are very distressing for all those involved, as well as for the whole Hughes Hall community and the wider University. The College's priority is and remains the welfare of all students.

The events themselves elicited attention on both social and some mainstream media some of which raised questions about the management and organisation of this kind of student-run event.

Following the incident, the College informed its student community about what had taken place (as well as its staff and senior members) and updated them accordingly, as well as providing welfare support information and reminders of how to report anything of concern.

The following statement was issued in response to media enquiries:

"There have been extremely concerning reports of spiking and sexual harassment at a College bop on Friday. The welfare and safety of our community is our priority and the College treats incidents of this kind very seriously. The police have been informed and we are supporting the students affected. We have written to our student body to inform them of these shocking reports and are undertaking a full investigation, including consideration of any additional steps needed to keep our community safe."

The students involved were supported medically and pastorally in their recovery. As mentioned above, the police were informed and the College committed to undertake a full investigation of the event, including consideration of any additional steps needed to keep our community safe.

Events of this type are currently suspended. This investigation is now complete and there follows a summary of its findings.

Summary of the College investigation into this event

An immediate investigation was carried out by the Bursar. The investigation looked into the event planning and how it was managed on the night including pre-event arrangements and preparation, the location of the event and the guest strategy; it also looked at the management of the event itself, including security, porters, student welfare officers, bar management and incident reporting.

The investigation looked into the circumstance around the reported spiking incident although any detailed examination of this potentially criminal activity was a matter of a police investigation. Cambridgeshire Police have since advised that their investigation is closed and that based on the available evidence no further action will be taken.

Similarly, whilst the internal review did look at the circumstances around the reports of sexual harassment, it did not investigate individual behaviour. All formal complaints of harassment would be investigated through either the College or the University complaints procedures. However, no formal complaints of harassment have been received by the College or the University.

The recommendations arising from this investigation, and endorsed by College Council on 18th January 2020, cover the safe running of any future events, including guest policy, security arrangements and communications, and implementing improved awareness training on the risks of spiking and sexual harassment.

The three key recommendations are:

1. **A revised set of protocols to be developed that covers all bops and similar events.** These will be developed in consultation with all the key stakeholders and the working group looking at this will be made up of an equal number of students and College staff. These protocols and procedures will include details on venue suitability, planning timeframes, security staff and welfare arrangements, guest policies, bar management and communications. No future events are being held until such revised protocols are agreed and published.
2. **Awareness training for staff, security personnel and students** around issues to do with sexual harassment and the risks of spiking to be introduced as soon as is practical.
3. **A term-by-term schedule of all bops and other student events** to be agreed in advance and regularly reviewed by the College with the appropriate members of the MCR.

Work on each of these recommendations is underway, and the first of the awareness training sessions has already been scheduled.

Hughes Hall does not tolerate discriminatory, anti-social or illegal behaviour. Hughes Hall is committed to maintaining an environment for the whole College community that is welcoming, safe and convivial, and in which the rights and dignity of all our members are respected at all times.

Published 31.01.2022