

## Police "Safety" Campaigns: Institutionalised Victim Blaming

We've written on numerous occasions about the victim blaming and rape myths peddled by police, particularly in the run up to [the festive season](#). As we've said many times, the only people who can stop rape are rapists and effective anti-rape campaigns MUST be targeted at perpetrators, not victims.

This poster is from Northern Ireland and dates back to 2011. Whilst it has since been removed, it exemplifies pretty much everything that is wrong with police "safety" campaigns. It holds women, and police "safety" campaigns are always directed at women, responsible for the behaviour of rapists. These campaigns are actually quite dangerous because they conflate misinformation with assumptions about what they want women to think will keep them safe. Unfortunately, we all know that taxi drivers commit rape and that male friends and acquaintances are far more likely to rape women than strangers. The complete erasure of the perpetrator from these types of campaigns speaks to an unwillingness to limit men's space in which to exist. Preventing women from living their lives is classed as reasonable behaviour; telling men to stop raping mean.



**Alcohol**  
is the number one  
**RAPE**  
**DRUG.**  
How much  
have you taken  
already?

Be S·M·A·R·T

Many rapes happen when people are drunk.  
Follow these steps to protect yourself.

- Don't get so drunk you don't know what you're doing.
- Don't go alone to a stranger's house when you're drunk. Arrange to meet them when you're sober.
- Don't accept drink from someone you've just met and don't share drinks. Only leave your drink with someone you trust.
- Plan how you're going to get home. Don't walk home alone or go with someone you've just met. Stay with friends or get a taxi.

Be S·M·A·R·T

- ★ Say NO to any sex you don't want.
- ★ Make yourself clearly understood.
- ★ Alcohol affects your judgement so watch what you drink.
- ★ Rape stays with you for life.
- ★ Take care of each other and don't go off with someone you've just met.

The new theme of "safety" campaigns is about [regret](#): as though being raped was akin to choosing the wrong type of ice cream flavour. Regret is focused on a female victim because it is *her fault* that rape occurred. This West Mercia poster, pulled in 2012 following a huge backlash, sums up the regret theme:



Even the recent [In the know campaign](#), which targets perpetrators has fallen down the regret rabbit hole with this:

It's not enough to say you weren't thinking straight – don't do something you could end up regretting. If you go ahead without checking, saying 'I wasn't thinking' or 'I forgot to ask' *won't* get you off the hook.

In this theory, rape is an accident that men might regret in the morning. We need to be really clear here: rape is not a 'regret'. It's a criminal act. Suggesting that it's a 'regret' supports the common rape myth that women lie about rape because they regret drunken sex. It is also a clear minimising tactic.

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary's [Time to Stop](#) targets both victims and perpetrators. They get the section on perpetrators right:

Rape is sex without consent or where the victim was incapable of consenting through drink, drugs or other means. It is irrelevant, in the eyes of the law, if the two people are in or have previously been in a relationship.

But revert back to victim blaming language:

Look after yourself and stick with your friends when out and about, don't let alcohol cloud your

judgement and always arrange safe travel home.



They've also produced a YouTube video which we don't like:

<https://youtu.be/jjVlgtMixAo>



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It's not all bad though. [Devon and Cornwall Constabulary's #NoBlurredLines](#) posters are brilliant:



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# THERE ARE #NOBLURREDLINES



## SEX WITHOUT CONSENT IS RAPE

Rape Crisis Helpline  
**0808 802 9999**  
999 Emergency  
101 Non-emergency



**Devon & Cornwall Police**  
Building safer communities together

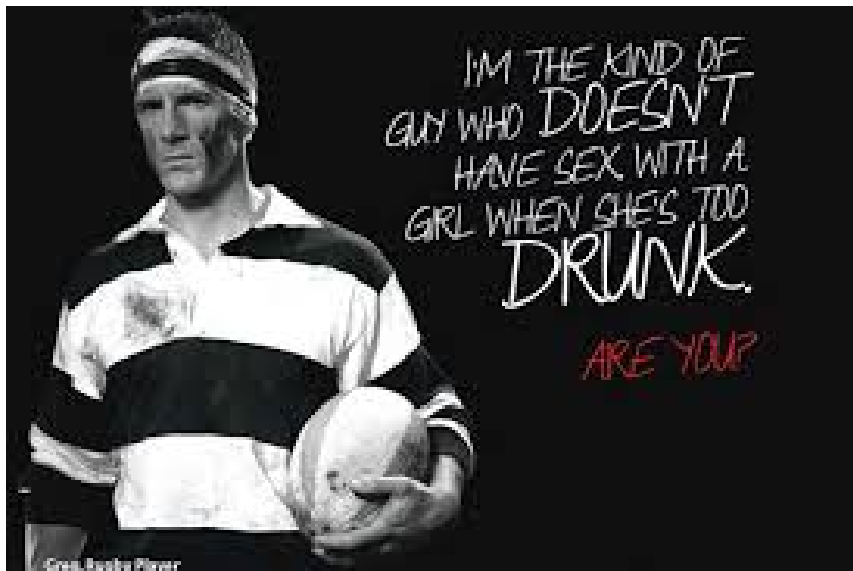


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Scotland remains miles ahead of England and Wales in their anti-rape campaigns. The newest campaign "[We can stop it](#)" targets perpetrators.



Our favourite remains this campaign from Rape Crisis Scotland:



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## 10 Top Tips to End Rape

- 1 Don't put drugs in women's drinks.
- 2 When you see a woman walking by herself, leave her alone.
- 3 If you pull over to help a woman whose car has broken down, remember not to rape her.
- 4 If you are in a lift and a woman gets in, don't rape her.
- 5 Never creep into a woman's home through an unlocked door or window, or spring out at her from between parked cars, or rape her.
- 6 **USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM!**  
If you are not able to stop yourself from assaulting people, ask a friend to stay with you while you are in public.
- 7 Don't forget: it's not sex with someone who's asleep or unconscious – it's RAPE!
- 8 Carry a whistle! If you are worried you might assault someone 'by accident' you can hand it to the person you are with, so they can call for help.
- 9 Don't forget: Honesty is the best policy. If you have every intention of having sex later on with the woman you're dating regardless of how she feels about it, tell her directly that there is every chance you will rape her. If you don't communicate your intentions, she may take it as a sign that you do not plan to rape her and inadvertently feel safe.
- 10 Don't rape.

Looking for information and ideas on how to campaign against rape?  
Check out the following websites: [www.thisisnotaninvitationtorapeme.co.uk](http://www.thisisnotaninvitationtorapeme.co.uk)  
[www.notever.co.uk](http://www.notever.co.uk)



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Police "safety" campaigns which focus on the victim institutionalise victim blaming culture. It tells women they are responsible for being raped and gives rapists a free pass to perpetrate rape knowing that even the police will hold the victim accountable.