Safe Nights Out: Workers' perspectives on tackling violence against women and girls.

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CANTERBURY SAFER STREETS

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Executive Summary.

Existing research focused on workers within the night-time economy (NTE) is limited. In this unique study, research was conducted with workers from a wide range of professions and occupations. The study garnered important insights into NTE workers' understanding and experience of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Workers observed a strong relationship between alcohol consumption and VAWG and were knowledgeable about spiking, perceiving this practice to be growing. Strong protocols were in place to support women when spiking was alleged. The understanding of VAWG was, in contrast, broad but inconsistent.

NTE workers provide myriad ways to support and protect women who are out at night. However, responses to potential incidents of VAWG are shaped by intuition, rather than being rooted in formal knowledge and institutional protocols. The decision to intervene is usually based on NTE workers' levels of experience, confidence, and subjective perception of risk – described as 'going with your gut'.

There were, however, some good examples of where formal training had been provided and found to be useful. Specifically, there was evidence that many of the initiatives established as part of the Safer Streets project were making a difference. Respondents valued the training that they had received (such as zero-tolerance), and they recognised the important role that Street Pastors provide.

Nevertheless, several training gaps were identified. Specifically, workers reported that they wanted to be better equipped to identify potential perpetrators of crime and would welcome advice on how to enhance personal and customer safety. NTE workers would also benefit from knowing more about the location and value of safe havens.

While most respondents felt safe during their shifts and supported by their employers, they reported that gendered, sexualised, and racial abuse was a ubiquitous feature of their working lives. Such violence was described as normal, and to be expected. In turn, these forms of abuse were largely tolerated, not least because reporting of such crime was deemed to be ineffective. The experience of violence at work had an impact on the way that workers organised their transport home after work, their conduct outside of work, as well as their mental health.

The policing of the NTE is shared by statutory and non-statutory bodies. The Police reported that they felt overstretched, and the study highlighted the central role that private Security Guards play in maintaining order at night. Door staff are often the first responders, taking personal risks to intervene in street-based incidents. Offering more support and training to this group of workers and valuing their insights should strengthen collaboration with the Police and enhance street safety.

The study showed that while many venues offer support to customers, there is some inconsistency in the way that safety measures are advertised and enacted.

The findings support the following recommendations:

1. The development of a Canterbury Night-time Economy strategy focused on a multi-agency approach
2. Strengthened relations between formal and informal partners within the NTE
3. Enhanced and Tailored Training
4. Review the efficacy of safe havens
5. Advertising and Publicity
6. Support for NTE workers
7. Improvements to the design and layout of premises
8. The development of a VAWG toolkit for workers

1

Introduction.

In recent years, there has been a societal and political commitment to keeping people safe at night when visiting commercial venues, walking in the street, or taking public transport. This fundamental shift has largely focused on the safety of women and girls to address historical narratives that placed the burden on women and girls to keep themselves safe. A new discourse has emerged which acknowledges the need to target perpetrators through early intervention and effective detection, and to equip bystanders with the knowledge and skills to effectively intervene when situations arise.

It is recognised that to combat violence against women and girls, who are disproportionately victims of night-time crime, it is imperative to understand the nature of after dark risk and share good practice for the prevention of night-time crime. The Safer Streets Fund was allocated to evaluate existing initiatives already employed within the night-time economy (NTE) to enhance safety. The intention was to provide an evidence-based approach through which to identify innovative and inventive approaches, as well as knowledge about what works best, and to understand

where there are residing risks and how they can be mitigated (Home Office, 2021). Specifically, the funding was focussed on understanding how perpetrators of night-time violence can be identified and how potential victims can be protected.

Considering that much violence occurs in city centres, close to licenced venues, and between the hours of midnight and 6am, employees' knowledge, understanding and experience of the NTE is important. However, research scrutiny of this sector is limited.

The objective of the study was to hear about NTE workers' experience of witnessing and encountering VAWG (as well as non-gendered violence more generally), and their understanding of where and when their own safety and the safety of NTE customers was most likely to be compromised.

The research was also designed to garner insight into the strategies that were already in place to enhance safety, and workers' views about how safety at night could be further enhanced. This report collates key findings and provides recommendations for the Home Office, the local Police force, city and county councils, the charitable bodies that support customers of the NTE, the commercial venues and businesses that operate at night, as well as the city's universities.

What is meant by violence against women and girls (VAWG)?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) encompasses a broad range of behaviours and practices that disproportionally impact women and girls, including, but not limited to, harassment, coercive and controlling behaviour, domestic abuse, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, revenge porn, honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and murder (Home Office, 2021).

A nation-wide survey conducted by All-Party Parliamentary Group for UN Women (2021), showed that 71% of all respondents of all ages in the UK had experienced a form of sexual harassment in public spaces. Furthermore, this increased to 86% among respondents aged 18-24 years of age (APPG-UNW, 2021).

Evidence has shown that women and girls are subjected to sexual harassment and violence in private, public, social, online, educational and professional settings. It is estimated that in the UK, in the year ending March 2020, 618,000 women had experienced a sexual assault or an attempted sexual assault, and 892,000 women had experienced stalking (Home Office, 2021).

Women and girls have reported feeling especially unsafe in public spaces and fear unwelcome and unwanted remarks, touching and violence (including fear of being raped and murdered). Official data suggests that 1 in 2 women feel unsafe when alone in public spaces at night (ONS, 2021). This fear has foundation. Data collected by Crime Survey for England and Wales (2021) found that 37% of rape offences occurred outside of the victim's/perpetrator's home in public spaces, and for 9% of the victims the rape or assault occurred in a park, car park, on the street or other open public space (Home Office, 2021).

For this study, and in line with the Safer Streets guidelines, the research focused on addressing violence against women and girls in public spaces only.

What is meant by the Night-Time Economy (NTE)?

The NTE has no standard definition (Haleem et al, 2021), but is generally taken to refer to any work activities that are conducted between 6pm and 6am. In its broadest capacity, the NTE involves 27% of the workforce when industries such as fishery, care work and transportation are included (ONS, 2023a).

Leisure in the NTE can range from family meals, through to frequenting late-night bars and clubbing. The sector, therefore, covers an array of practices and people, that extends beyond employment in alcohol and leisure (bar, restaurant and club staff, private security staff, and sex workers), to encompass train and bus drivers, taxi drivers, food couriers, street cleaners, voluntary Street Pastors and emergency health workers (Roberts and Eldrige, 2012).

The NTE industry, at least pre-pandemic, was noted for its extensive financial contribution to society: the lucrative, twenty-four hour, 'booze' economy was estimated to bring a revenue of around £60 billion each year (Castree, 2007; Hobbs, 2005). With this economic contribution comes the opportunity for regeneration and employment (Furedi, 2016), alongside the concentration of unhealthy as well as criminal activity (Shaw, 2010).

Specifically, the NTE is linked to violence between men, against women, as well as criminal damage to properties and people (Finney, 2004). Indeed, the NTE is linked directly to so-called urban crime 'hotspots' (Philpot et al., 2019): deemed to be a 'risky' place (Bowers, 2014) associated with a concentration of violence. Norton and colleagues (2018) showed that there are specific locations, known as 'harm spots', which make up only 1% of all places but are responsible for almost 50% of harmful crimes, including sexual offences, violence against individuals, robbery, theft, and handling. These 'harm spots' are typically concentrated near licensed premises, such as pubs, bars, and nightclubs. As such, most violent incidents tend to occur in city/town centres, and peak on Fridays and Saturdays (Haleem et al., 2021; Newton, 2009).

Research has consistently demonstrated a strong link between violent crime and the ready availability of alcohol in licensed premises (Finney, 2004; Plant et al., 2007; Norton et al., 2018; Lightowlers, Sanchez, and Mclaughlin, 2021), with data showing that over half of all violent crimes are alcohol related (Flatley, 2016; Haleem et al., 2021). A review conducted by Lippy and DeGue (2016) also established this correlation suggesting between 34% and 74% of sexual violence perpetrators had consumed alcohol at the time of the incident.

This research evidence honed the focus of this study, with the emphasis placed on workers employed in Canterbury city centre NTE between midnight and 6am.

VAWG and the NTE

Official statistics tend to underestimate sexual violence and the prevalence of violence occurring during the NTE, especially inside pubs and clubs, as it is often under-reported by businesses (Shepherd and Brickley, 1996). Research, albeit dated, suggests that licensees can be hesitant to report incidents as they fear the negative attention that might be brought to their businesses. Instead, businesses often prefer to rely on their own hired security staff to handle any issues that arise (Lister et al., 2000).

In addition, victims of NTE crimes may not report the incidents for several reasons. Some of these reasons include a lack of trust in the Police and a belief that the perpetrator is unlikely to be held accountable without supporting evidence (Taylor and Gassner, 2010). Moreover, feelings of shame, fear, guilt, embarrassment, and a desire to keep the situation private from friends and family may also prevent victims from coming forward (Sable et al., 2006).

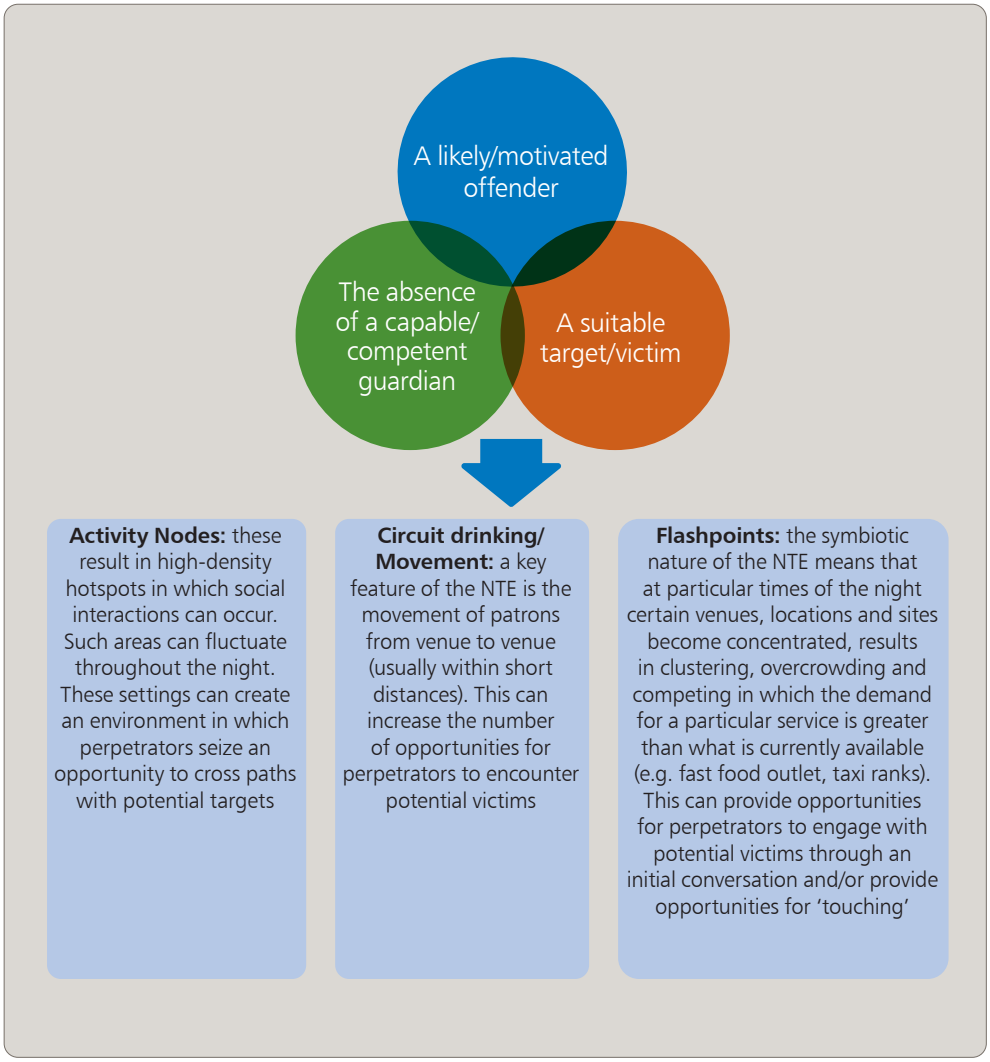
Nevertheless, England and Wales witnessed an officially recorded surge in sexual violence prior to the pandemic, which has continued to be a cause for concern after the pandemic (Ellis, 2022). There is evidence that sexual offences have increased by 31% and are at the highest level in any twelve-month period. The increase is especially noted for rape cases (ONS, 2022a).

Official statistics and quantitative research establish a correlation between public-based sexual violence and alcohol-licenced premises in town centres, occurring, most usually, in the early hours of the morning. While surveys have been useful for the examination of consumers' perceptions of safety and their experience of harm (Miller et al., 2012), little attention, in contrast, has been given to the experiences of NTE workers.

Considering that the NTE has distinctive characteristics that shape the experience of its users and workers, Routine Activity Theory (Figure 1) is useful for mapping this context.

It suggests that for crime to occur at least three conditions must be met: (1) A likely/ motivated offender; (2) A suitable target/victim; (3) the absence of a capable/competent guardian (Cohen and Felson, 1979). These conditions are significantly more likely to co-exist within the context of the NTE. The combination of intoxicated individuals, a larger number of patrons in a confined area, often dark settings, and fewer guardians (e.g., Police Officers and security staff), increases the likelihood of gender-based crime occurring in the night-time rather than in the day.

Figure 1: Routine Activity Theory in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls within the Night-Time Economy



Canterbury and the NTE

Canterbury is a medieval city in East Kent with a city population of just over 43,000, and a wider authority population size of 157,400 (ONS, 2022b) and constitutes the second largest economy in Kent. The UNESCO World Heritage Site and the city's proximity to London and the coast, mean that Canterbury attracts tourists from all over the world, with an average of 7.8 million visitors each year. Moreover, the city's three universities, attract approximately 40,000 students per year, the majority of which are within the age range of 18 to 24 years. The student demographic supports a vibrant nightlife and provides a considerable proportion of NTE workers.

Overall, data suggests that in 2021, 16.9% of residents in Canterbury were within the age range of 16 to 24 years (ONS, 2023bc), the cohort, as already noted, that are the most likely to experience sexual assaults. Furthermore, a recent survey has highlighted that a higher proportion of students were victims/survivors of sexual assault than any other occupation (ONS, 2023).

In the Canterbury area, survey research suggests that residents feel most unsafe between midnight and 6am, with just 15.8% of females feeling safe when in the city centre and Dane John Gardens (Canterbury Community Safety Partnership, 2021). Empirical data suggests that some of these fears have foundation. The city has seen an increase in violent crime more recently, a 68.6% rise of incidents of violence recorded between 2011 and 2021 (Varbes, n.d.). However, recent data from the Kent Police suggests that the trend towards greater violence in the city has been both stemmed and reversed (unpublished data).

Despite perceived risk amongst residents, there is evidence to suggest Canterbury is a safe city. In 2011, Canterbury City Centre was awarded the internationally recognised Purple Flag Award, a status it has maintained since this time. Designation of Purple Flag status is recognition that customers can expect a vibrant and varied offer, and moreover that there is a clear strategy in place to support their wellbeing and enable them to travel safely. A range of services/interventions are employed to secure Purple Flag status including, the offer of Zero Tolerance training to venues, accreditation of venues through the Best Bar None awards that signpost venues where training has been undertaken, twelve refuge points (safe havens), signposting of connected and safe ways to traverse the city, free buses, a Safe Zone app that is available to students and residents, alongside bystander training, Safe Night Out campaigns run by the universities, and Street Pastor and Marshal volunteers that are trained to support people who might need assistance. Overall, Canterbury remains one of the safest non-metropolitan areas in the UK and is ranked 103/181 for safe metropolitan locations.

The research provided the opportunity to explore both perceptions of safety and experiences of harm within Canterbury, as well as evaluate how well mechanisms designed to protect customers and minimise violence were working.

Remit of the Study

Much of our understanding of the prevalence and form of VAWG within the NTE is based on research conducted with customers (e.g., Anitha et al., 2021; Gunby et al., 2010; Sheard, 2011; Nicholls, 2017).

User research has documented the palpable fear that women experience when out at night, and has shown that violent harassment is an everyday, persistent, and ubiquitous experience, with unwanted sexual attention both trivialised and normalised. It has been shown that women must manage the NTE risks themselves by thinking about their clothing and their conduct, and by relying on friends and personal resilience to challenge unwanted advances and attention (Vera-Gray and Kelly, 2020).

The limited research that has focussed specifically on NTE workers such as bar staff, bouncers, and couriers in the UK (Cant, 2019; Green, 2022; Hobbs et al., 2005; 2007; Lister et al., 2000) is qualitative, conducted with small samples and focused on specific groups of workers. As such, little is known about the experiences of a broad range of NTE workers, even though these groups are often at risk of experiencing violence and harassment themselves. This research project was designed to broaden the scope of previous studies.

The research study focused on people who work in fast food outlets, bars and clubs after midnight, Street Pastors who volunteer to support night-time customers, Police Officers who work night-time shifts, Security Guards who are employed privately in night-time venues, and taxi drivers who transport night-time staff and customers. Many of these workers are young and employed on precarious contracts, with work tending to be part-time or casual, and low-paid. Moreover, these workers, as we outline below, often engage in 'policing' and 'governance' in the absence of a formal Police presence in their places of work (Hobbs et al., 2005). It was hoped that combining the insights of a broad range of workers with those of serving Police Officers would provide a detailed understanding of risk within the NTE and support national ambitions to address violent crime and violence against women and girls.

Some NTE workers were excluded as access was limited e.g., sex workers. We also had restricted access to food couriers and could only secure one interview with a delivery rider. Additionally, personnel who work in health and other public services, such as the fire brigade, were excluded, thus limiting the insights that research with these additional groups might generate.

Insights from the literature

Informal Policing

The research literature suggests that the combined presence of Police and door staff bolsters customer perceptions of safety (Brands et al., 2015). In practice, much responsibility for the management of NTE crime is vested in individual businesses. Indeed, more recent policy changes that extended police powers have been used sparingly, resulting in limited police intervention within licenced properties (Hadfield et al., 2009). Consequently, there is evidence that the NTE is characterised by inequitable governance, with responsibilities often placed on front-of-house bouncers and private Security Guards (Koeppen and Hopkins, 2022; Hobbs et al., 2005; Winlow and Hall, 2009).

According to certain scholars and commentators, the development of in-house strategies to enforce laws within licensed premises may be the most efficacious approach to mitigating alcohol-related harm (Plant, Plant and Green, 2007). However, there is little contemporary research in this area. Indeed, the neo-liberalisation of NTE has been accompanied by a dearth of research interest, in part because much of the practice of governance is privatised and unregulated and thereby invisible, nor subject to Police or local authority scrutiny. This project enabled a review of local, venue-specific responses, and the identification of good practice.

Bouncers and private Security Guards, specifically, straddle the boundary between the legal and illegal aspects of nightlife (Hobbs et al., 2003), both dealing with violence against themselves, as well as regulating and managing the violence that others experience. Hobbs et al (2005) describe the 'subtle harshness' (p. 9) of 'dirty' door work. In their study, not only were nightclubs characterised by alcohol-induced chaos – a transgressive and stressful environment, where aggressive sexuality abounds and regularly 'goes-off' (p.11), but bouncers were responsible for maintaining and where necessary, restoring order. Indeed, the authors suggested that without bouncers, it would be unlikely that the Police could manage the (economically lucrative) disorder of the night. Bouncers, in their study had to make personal judgement calls about when and how to intervene – an ambiguous (liminal) responsibility, sitting somewhere between the law and the subjective knowledge and interpretation of the context by workers. Accordingly, bouncers navigated the public and private realms of retributive justice, constituting a form of informal commercial policing (p.119). The authors noted that the aggression, authority, and presence of bouncers 'thrives in the absence of strong and enforceable laws and codes of conduct, providing a web of common practices across the night, and filling the void created by the state's own far less nocturnal habits' (p.163). The study showed that bouncers regularly witnessed and experienced violence, and often intervened to protect women.

Bouncers have also been accused of contributing to violent incidents such as assaults. However, studies indicate that accusations pertaining to bouncers – as either the victim or the perpetrator - are seldom subject to legal action (Lister et al., 2000). When it comes to assaults involving bouncers, the low rate of reporting and conviction is particularly pertinent. Lister and colleagues (2000) observed that victims of such assaults may opt not to report the offence due to the gatekeeper role of door staff in the NTE, which creates the fear of being permanently banned from venues. Moreover, assault victims from licensed premises are sometimes viewed sceptically by the Police, who may assume the person has been drinking, and therefore suggest that they return later when they are sober. As a result, the reporting process often stagnates. While insightful, the research is dated and there is a need for contemporary investigation.

Specifically, since Hobbs and colleagues important work, there has been a growth in the private Security Guard industry over the last 30 years. To work in the security services, workers must secure a front-line Security Industry Licence (issued by the SIA) and there was an estimated 218,200 Security Guards employed in the UK in 2022, an increase of over 40,000 since 2010, but with some significant fluctuation during the pandemic (SIA, 2022).

Little is known about private Security Guard experiences, training, identity, and risks, although there is a recognition that turnover is high and satisfaction levels are low. The Security Industry Authority (2022) conducted a survey with workers in 2022 and showed that employees were concerned, amongst other things, about low pay, training and vetting requirements, unsociable hours, lack of progression, and the level of verbal and physical violence encountered at work.

Löfstrand and colleagues (2016) also showed that workers in this industry were concerned about the lack of protection they were afforded by way of equipment. Indeed, studies suggest that these workers would welcome the right to carry batons and use pepper sprays and would like to be able to protect themselves by wearing bullet proof vests, carrying radios and having body cameras. Security Guards also often attend private self-defence or martial arts lessons, in the absence of formal training and support (Koeppen and Hopkins, 2022; Porter et al., 2015).

Considering the significant role that NTE workers perform in the management of violence, the fact that they are sometimes implicated in violence, and they are at risk of experiencing harm themselves, the importance of research in this sector is established.

NTE Worker Risk

The need to examine the experience of NTE workers is pressing, not simply because of the role that they occupy in the informal policing of violence, but also because they are themselves disproportionately 'at risk.'

Physical assault has been shown to be a commonplace experience for bouncers. Tutenges and colleagues (2015) surveyed 159 male bouncers and found that the majority reported that they had been physically assaulted. The same has been shown to be the case for women bouncers. In Hobbs and colleagues (2007) study, women bouncers described themselves as tough and unafraid of violence and they expected to be hurt as part of their work when managing unruly female customers.

Little is known about private Security Guards who work at night, but Keoppen and Hopkins' (2022) study of guards that work during the day is instructive. They established that the experience of violence is widespread with far reaching physical and mental consequences. Their data suggested that over half of private Security Guards experience violence when at work, of which 60% are injured.

Many NTE workers are women (covering sex work, but also other sectors (Shaw, 2022)) and migrants (MacQuarie, 2019) - often precariously employed as well as structurally marginalised - who bear the brunt of associated work-based risks, as well as the consequences of shift working on sleep, health, and family life (MacQuarie, 2019; Shaw, 2022). These research insights point to the emotional and psychological burdens that NTE work may carry. For example, Coffey and colleagues (2018) have highlighted the requirement of affective labour from women in NTE spaces, which involves performing 'gendered practices' beyond the specific skills necessary to complete service-related duties. These practices - demanded of women to generate profits and value for their employers - include wearing of sexualised clothing, use of makeup and 'flirting' with the clientele. As a result of these implicit expectations, women often find themselves in situations where they must casually disregard sexualized encounters and harassment from their customers.

More recent studies corroborate the suggestion that sexual violence experienced by NTE workers is commonplace. According to Green's (2022) study on bartenders, female bar staff frequently experienced unwanted sexual attention at work, including staring, lewd comments, and ogling at their breasts. While staff were advised by their management teams to inform a supervisor or door staff if they encountered sexual harassment from customers, in practice they were frequently left to fend for themselves. Inexperienced staff members described feeling torn between wanting to be good at their job and not wanting to appear as if they are bad at their job by speaking out against unwanted advances. This led to the acceptance of unwanted attention to demonstrate competence in their new role.

Limited research on club and bar staff suggests that working in the NTE is often experienced as risky, to a much greater extent than captured by official statistics, and it is often normalised and disregarded. This study provided the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of a range of NTE workers.

This is imperative considering that research on other NTE workers is even more scarce. Shaw's (2014) ethnographic research is the only study of taxi drivers and street cleaners in the UK, the former central to NTE mobility, the latter to its clear up – an essential role as night-time revelling is associated with 'blood, vomit, urine and splattered take-aways.' However, this research focused on the way NTE workers manage mobility and waste rather than their role in witnessing and policing violence. There is also nascent research that shows that taxi drivers are at high risk of victimisation (McGregor et al., 2016; Mayhew and Chappell, 2007) – including verbal abuse, robbery, and assault, as well as murder - but much less on their role as a witness or helper.

Similarly, in a recent ethnography of Deliveroo riders, Cant (2019) showed that the realities of working in this industry are harsh. As a counter to the idea that work is flexible, he revealed the mistreatment of workers and the violence that they regularly experienced. Most of Cant's research documented the exploitation that the workers endured from the companies (shift work, zero hours, etc,.) and their forms of resistance. Details about their experience of violence was less prominent, although it punctuated the study. There were examples of riders being subject to abuse, robbery, and physical attack – and as such the job is associated with danger and risk. Considering the times that Deliveroo drivers work and the violence that they also will witness, this aspect of their experience was not explored, suggesting an important gap in our knowledge. However, the precarity of workers in this sector, the transitional nature of their working practices, and the fact that they are sometimes undocumented, makes them a hard to access group for research purposes.

Finally, there is a growing body of research that has examined the role of Street Pastors (Johns et al., 2018; Middleton and Yarwood, 2015; Van Steden, 2017; Westall, 2020) – a group of uniformed interdenominational Christian volunteers – who since 2003 have grown a nationwide web of local networks to patrol the NTE. Their aim is to offer practical support for vulnerable people out at night, such as giving out water to the inebriated, and flip flops to women who cannot walk in their high heels. The objective of Street Pastors is to intervene if approached, but also reassure users of the NTE that the streets are safe – acting as a deterrent to violence. In this way, their role staddles help and policing, providing a free resource to the state, and a substitute for Police presence. Indeed, Swann and colleagues (2015) describe the emergence of Street Pastors as an example of the shift from policing by the state to plural policing from 'below'. As observed in the case of bouncers, the positioning of Street Pastors is also informal and, therefore, their actions and decisions are largely unregulated and lack accountability. To date, research has explored volunteer motivations, but there is little evaluation of their efficacy or their own experience managing and navigating street violence.

Summary

Taken together the literature has established that the leisure industry in the NTE is characterised by risk and violence and is reliant on informal policing where NTE workers must protect themselves and choose when to intervene to safeguard customers. However, our understanding of NTE workers is dated and limited, and has not been directly focussed on their training and reporting of violence. It is imperative that we better understand the experiences and needs of these actors.

Research in this area is likely to have a strong impact beyond the support of workers, to increase safety for all users of the NTE. Scholars (such as Plant, Plant and Green, 2007) have identified several internal changes within licensed premises that could reduce the link between alcohol and violence. Our study enabled an examination of the context in which NTE workers are employed and the opportunity to identify good practice in this regard.

2

Research Questions.

The research was framed around five central questions:

1. What is the understanding of violence against women and girls amongst night-time economy workers?

2. What strategies (if any) are taken by night-time economy venues and staff to reduce incidences of violence against women and girls and/or increase the detection of perpetrators?

3. What are the experiences of night-time economy workers as bystanders?

4. To what extent (if any) have night-time economy workers experienced violence and harassment?

5. How do night-time venues and workers contribute to violence against women and girls and other harmful behaviour in public spaces?

3

Methodology.

While there is nascent research into the experience of NTE workers, most research has been conducted with customers, and much is dated. Qualitative research studies within the NTE have been the most insightful for two key reasons.

First, findings from survey research have been compromised by insufficient access to robust sample frames, and an unwillingness of respondents to participate leading to low response rates and potentially limited data.

Second, and in contrast, qualitative techniques are particularly helpful when the research field is young and where a more rich and detailed understanding of the terrain is required, and where participant insights can help shape the research agenda. For this reason, where there is a dearth of research, qualitative enquiry precedes the application of quantitative approaches.

Our objective was to understand the experiences and views of NTE workers rather than map this experience, and therefore a study using focus groups, and where appropriate individual interviews, was designed. Following this research, a thorough mapping of the experiences of NTE workers, using survey techniques that contain apposite and informed questions, will be possible.

Selection of venues: a list of all the NTE venues within Canterbury City Centre was obtained from Kent Police and inclusion factors were used to narrow down the sample.

The inclusion factors for venue selection were:

1. The venue/operation must be situated in the CT1 postcode/within the city walls.

2. Venues must operate beyond midnight on at least one night of the week (Monday-Sunday).

Canterbury City Centre has 28 late night venues including fast food restaurants, bars and clubs that met the inclusion criteria. All venues were contacted by email and telephone. However, some owners or managers explained that they were reluctant to participate as they feared reputational damage, despite assurances of anonymity. Others did not respond, despite follow up communication.

In total, eight venues agreed to participate. In addition, the research team contacted a Security Guard Provider, The Police, Street Pastors, and Taxi Driver Companies, as well as using snowball techniques to locate food couriers. The table below (Table 1) maps the focus groups and individual interviews and number of participants in each.

Focus groups were predominantly held at the NTE venues or the NTE organisation's place of work. Some focus groups were conducted in private university campus rooms and/or on Microsoft Teams when respondents did not have fixed locations whilst on shift, and/or if they were primarily engaged with the public by patrolling the streets. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour. All transcripts were anonymised and stored on encrypted devices.

Participants were asked questions on their experience, understanding of VAWG, strategies that they take to reduce harm, training and their own safety (see Appendix 1 for a list of question prompts). Each focus group/interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were analysed and emerging themes were drawn and cross-checked by all members of the research team.

Where focus groups were conducted within the venue, the researchers made observations on the venue layout including the presence of campaigns and posters.

Research Note: The focus groups varied in gender composition. It is important to reflect on how mixed gender groups may have impacted responses. For instance, it was observed in one focus group that contained two females and one male, that responses from the women about violence that they had experienced were more candid when the male absented himself for a period. This said, in some mixed gender focus groups, the combination of women and men did not seem to influence the sharing of experiences. Specifically, many females appeared comfortable detailing explicit personal experiences of sexual violence with male colleagues present. Additionally, in some male only focus groups, the impact of violence on them was often framed using humour. In contrast, in mixed groups, male vulnerability to sexual harassment and violence was more openly discussed, the focus groups serving to foster a safe space for discussion. In general, there was an overwhelming consensus that the focus group settings had provided important reflective spaces. They allowed respondents to share personal lived experiences, consider the role of NTE workers in keeping customers safe, hear about the concerns that workers had about their job, provide a platform to share best practice, as well hear about worker recommendations for change. As such, value of focus group research for the study and the participants themselves was recognised. However, we found little discussion of the risk of violence as perpetrated by colleagues, and the focus group format may have limited this sensitive discussion. Table 1 provides an overview of participating NTE professionals and the ratio of females to males within each session.

Ethical approval was gained from Canterbury Christ Church University.

Table 1: Participating night-time economy professionals

Professional	Number of participants	Gender (Female: Male)
Security/Door Staff: SG	4	2:2
Fast Food Workers 1: FF FG1	4	0:4
Fast Food workers 2: FF FG2	3	3:0
Street Pastors: SP	4	3:1
Bar Staff: Bar FG1	3	2:1
Bar Staff: Bar FG2	3	2:1
Fast food courier: FFC	1	0:1
Night club staff: Club FG1	5	3:2
Night club staff: Club FG2	7	3:4
Night Club staff: Club FG3	3	1:2
Police: Police FG1	4	1:3
Police: Police FG2	4	0:4
Police: Police FG3	3	0:3
Police: Police FG4	3	1:2
Police: Police FG5	3	1:2
Police: Police FG6	2	0:2
Taxi drivers: TD1	1	0:1
Taxi drivers: TD2	1	0:1
Total number of participants	58	

Key themes were identified from the transcripts: (1) knowledge and understanding of VAWG, (2) training and training needs, (3) workers experiences, including the normalisation of sexual violence and reporting practices 4) policing the night-time economy, (5) premise design, layout and visual aids.

Each of the themes are discussed in a separate section but are interlinked. The findings reveal the complex nature of the NTE and provide opportunities to consider the myriad factors that both secure and compromise the safety of women and girls at night.

4

Findings.

4.1 Knowledge and Understanding

The focus groups provided the opportunity to explore levels of knowledge and understanding about VAWG. Respondents made strong links between violence and alcohol consumption. Moreover, the extent of knowledge and understanding shaped NTE workers' confidence levels and their approaches to minimising risk.

Knowledge of VAWG

Most participants showed a good awareness of what was meant by VAWG. The majority were able to provide definitions of what stood as VAWG, and gave varying descriptions that encompassed physical, verbal, emotional and psychological manifestations. As such, it was clear that VAWG meant different things to different people, as there was a broad range of responses, rather than consistency. As these comments illustrate:

Club FG1: *'It can be small things, any sort of touch, unsolicited, I would count as violence…any physical harm…someone walking home at night can get catcalled and it can feel really aggressive, but it is based on personal opinion and what you are like as a person.'*

Club FG2: *'There are different aspects of harassment and violence…. you can see the physical aspects but there is also verbal.'*

Bar FG2: *'I dunno, I, the way that I see it…. it's more like taking advantage of them as well. Like I feel like working behind the bar you've seen like, males or even other females going up to girls and trying to talk them into a conversation that they don't particularly feel comfortable in.....*

Bar FG2 *'But sometimes I've been thinking like going too much into personal details. That's how it starts. I think it's coming across very uncomfortable when they start asking you how old are you? Do you have a boyfriend? And then that starts, so, 'where do you live?', 'are you local?' And then, you know, collecting all of the details.'*

TD2: *'It just means vulnerable women that are being taken advantage of. Due to maybe being in the wrong place, wrong time, or whether it's to do with alcohol or drugs to make them vulnerable or just that there are some people out there that have no respect for women or don't care that they might be hurting a woman.'*

Many respondents, working in bars, clubs, and fast food restaurants, referred to unwanted attention, being followed, having drinks tampered with, asking for details of where a person lived, as well as sexual innuendo and physical touching and attacks.

The Police also drew on range of definitions, often drawn from personal experience rather than official learning. One officer, for example, articulated a holistic appreciation of the fact that women should be able to participate in social life without fear, and explained that all women should be protected from physical sexual violence.

Police FG1: *'For me personally, it's about women feeling safe in the streets in Canterbury…. able to enjoy themselves just as much as anyone else...essentially not being raped or sexually assaulted.'*

A richer and more in-depth examination of VAWG was given by long serving officers that had extensive experience working with external partners:

Police FG4: *'So, it's a case of identifying a certain type of behaviour which is directly from men towards women that can include violence or intimidation, so it doesn't need to be physical, and it can incorporate domestic abuse. It can incorporate strangers, sexual assaults. It can be sexual touching. It can be full blown rape, maybe it could be spiking. So, it's trying to identify the vulnerabilities that women experience in their daily lives perpetrated by blokes and how we can actually stop that from happening by either educating or put things into place to try and safeguard...'*

However, for some participants, notably the male respondents who worked in a fast food restaurant, physical definitions alone (e.g., rape) were drawn upon, and there was a recognition from some that their understanding was limited.

FF FG1: *'Obviously it means that there is a higher percentage of women getting attacked than men…rape, probably assault, domestic batterings…. I don't know really.'*

Knowledge of what constituted VAWG was drawn from work-based observations and interactions with customers. All participants reported having regularly seen/ had reports of harassment, spiking, predatory behaviours and groping of intimate parts of the body of female customers. For this respondent, this was her first experience of working in a bar:

Bar FG1: *'In my first trial shift there was fight, and a girl who had been spiked, and we had to call the Police and an ambulance.'*

A taxi driver also described regularly interacting with female customers who voiced their experience(s) of sexual harassment and suspected spiking whilst on a night out in a particular night club:

TD2: *'That's where most allegations of spiking happen, girls getting hit on and sexually assaulted on the dance floor.'*

Whilst many respondents suggested they had witnessed VAWG, some described the difficulties they experienced in determining if a specific situation qualified as VAWG, as highlighted by this Police Officer:

Police FG1: *'VAWG may sometimes be quite difficult to identify where say you had a couple who go out and had too much to drink and you see them arguing in the town centre, or wherever, … Could be she's upset and then he's got his arms around her … trying to get her into a taxi or something like that, that could be your sort of standard*

argument. He is potentially drunk too much and upset her and said something he shouldn't have said and then that could also be a sort of be a small snapshot of what you're seeing, could actually be a pattern of controlling coercive behaviour, or that could lead on to something else. So sometimes it can be quite difficult to pick up on it, but you don't know until you go up and you ask them, separate them, start asking questions and things like that.'

A male taxi driver expressed the difficulties that males might have in determining and identifying what qualifies as VAWG in certain situations due to lack of personal experience in this area:

TD1: *'It's like weird interactions and inappropriate stuff…I suppose it's to do with privilege as well. Like me, nobody ever speaks to me in that kind of way, so I've got no direct experience of it. So, spotting it happening to other people can be difficult.'*

Knowledge about alcohol consumption and VAWG

Staff reported that excessive alcohol consumption was commonplace, emblematic of the NTE, and they drew a strong connection between alcohol consumption and being vulnerable to VAWG. As the Security Guards described:

R1: *'They're very drunk. ……a lot of it is 'intox'…. people that are in vulnerable positions and a lot of youngsters, especially around McDonald's, that just have nothing else to do and are out late at night.'*

R3: *'We've had young girls that are getting pestered …. you know, … for example, that might be walking down the High Street and a group of lads or something's like following them or chasing or saying whatever …. you know …… I'm walking behind a group of guys you can see they've got their eyes on these two drunk girls you can see exactly what they're doing and they're following and waiting even to the point where they're waiting in sort of alleyways to see these girls walk past next thing you know they've latched onto them and, and come back and, and we've ended up intervening.'*

R1: *'Yeah…..there was like a spate of... there was a particular group of people that were... they were working in like threes, so one of the three would like befriend a vulnerable female, and then they'd like, I don't know….by way of ohh ….[I will] get you some food or have my jacket or let me walk you to a taxi, but they try and lure them outside of the city walls... '*

Several staff reported the culture of pre-drinking contributed to higher levels of intoxication on a night out and thereby greater risk. Pre-drinking was regarded as a more common occurrence post the Covid 19 pandemic. The Security Guards noted a palpable change in not just drinking practices, but also an increased level of disrespect and abuse. It was suggested that younger people, when they did seek NTE leisure, were 'ruder', showing far less respect for rules and disciplinary activity. There was more likelihood,

private Security Guards observed, of kickback and confrontation from intoxicated customers.

As members of the Security Guard focus group explained:

R1: *'Now... with pre-drinking, they don't come out till half 10 or 11 o'clock at night, it's all changed.'*

Interviewer: *'Can you tell us what has changed?'*

R1: *'…there's more violence between themselves and towards us…. there's a lot more fear of weapons now.'*

R2: *'I think there's more attitude...'*

R3: *'The younger generation definitely…. the disrespectful way guys talk, it's disgusting. One guy does it and the others see it……there's a change in the younger generation... does not matter it its male or female…they just think about themselves.'*

R2: *'Yeah…. they just seem desensitised to what is wrong.'*

Greater questioning of the Security Guards' authority might, of course, be a product of the greater empowerment of young people. Certainly the #Metoo campaign and the circulation of knowledge via social media has served to increase levels of understanding and levels of acceptance of harassment (see, for example, Byron and Hunt, 2019). Generation Z – the centennials, although a homogenising category that masks complex difference, are described as generally more questioning and demanding, with a strong political voice (Rice and Moffett, 2021).

The concomitant use of social media when intoxicated was observed to be problematic. Police Officers explained that intoxicated women and girls were at risk of further exploitation beyond the actual moment of filming, an element of VAWG within the NTE that is rarely considered, as this discussion with Police FG5 outlines:

R1: *'I believe with the NTE, it's also important to look at social media as well. If there is a girl worst for wear it is not right for that picture to end up plastered across social media, especially when it hasn't got their consent.'*

R2: *'Yeah, there's a lot of reports that we get through, you know, it could be revengeful, and it could be anything, even something as little as well if you don't resume the relationship with me, I'll just disclose these photos. Just because they are threats, it doesn't mean they're not in fear of that violence. So, I think it could escalate, just a small photo could escalate to violence eventually.'*

R3: *'People take their pictures when they're on nights out because they think it's funny. Like a friend's drunk, but half the time people at that point are extremely vulnerable because they have no control over their surroundings… and by posting that stuff, say they're then left to walk home on their own. If there is somebody that's looking at social media that maybe target women on a night out, they'll see that this, this person is walking around, especially Snapchat because it's so public.'*

Beyond the exploitation of women, focus group participants suggested that filming and the use of social media was sometimes used by patrons to provide material for personal kudos, as a Security Guard observed:

'I honestly think this thing is a big social change. I think there's... there's a lot, you know, that a lot of incidents that I see that do impact on that and you know when kids are seeing things like on TikTok, Instagram seeing people doing what they're doing, it kind of 1) in a way desensitises things that are wrong because they're seeing it more often and 2) makes them think it's also more accepted. It's a badge of honour, its gonna get on Tik Tok you know, I wanna whack that guy or whatever else? I think it's a trend.'

However, the filming of interactions on phones also impacted on workers' responses and their confidence to intervene. Whilst filming and recording can be an important mechanism for self-protection and can provide evidence of perceived unfairness (Saarikkomaki, 2020) – an act of resistance that is widely documented in encounters with the Police (Sogaard et al, 2023) - for the private Security Guards it had the effect of reducing their willingness to intervene and instead opt for bystander/observer status.

Respondents argued that there had been a change in drinking behaviour and a concomitant rise in violence since the pandemic, with some more recent settling of levels of disruptive behaviour. Whilst the cultural rules that apply at night have always been different to daytime activity – the presence of alcohol and the cover of dark fostering a liminal space where ordinary expectations do not apply – the suggestion was that the behaviour of young people had worsened. Police Officers suggested that during the pandemic the younger generation had missed opportunities to learn how to manage their leisure time:

Police FG1: *'I think initially, as he said, after the pandemic, we got a lot of, I don't know what year or two years was also locked up, so a lot of people who were obviously reaching 18 and never actually getting out there to celebrate. So, of course, once the gates opened, they were all out there, these little people who literally don't know their limits, they haven't been trained, if you like, they're out there popping it back, aren't they? So again, there were probably a lot of offences and again, a lot of people thinking they've been spiked because they don't really know what it's like to be off their trolley. So, I think that was a lot of that…Yeah, seems to have settled down a little bit now and it's not any sort of worse than normal.'*

There is adjunct literature that supports this supposition. Lockdown had an appreciable impact on mental health and conduct. While some studies suggest a notable decrease in alcohol consumption since the pandemic (Evans et al., 2021), others report an increase (Niedzwiedz et al., 2021), with the expectation of associated peaks in alcohol-induced risks (Grigoletto et al., 2020). Certainly, during lockdown, young people lost any opportunity to engage with public leisure activity, or indeed more informal hanging around in public spaces, which served to 'encourage' illicit substance abuse (Woodrow and Moore, 2021). Bristow and Gilland (2020) suggest the construction of a 'Corona Generation', those young people who were coming of age during the pandemic, and who missed quotidian methods of socialisation.

Overall, the respondents suggested that alcohol consumption at night underpinned violence as well as more general anti-social behaviours.

Spiking and VAWG

All NTE workers were cognisant of the rise in spiking of drinks and had robust knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. Spiking was described as giving a person something that they did not ask for, including drugs, too much alcohol, the wrong type of alcohol without their knowledge / agreement. NTE staff were well versed about the ways that spiking could occur – in this exchange in Club FG2, the interlocutors exchanged ideas:

R1: *'Spiking is if you've given someone something that they haven't asked for or too much of something, so if someone's ordered like a single vodka coke and you've given them a double, you've technically given them more alcohol than they've asked for… more than they're happy with or whatever, and that's a spiking.'*

R2: *'It could be like someone's put drugs in someone's drink.'*

R3: *'We've had injections, I think, in the past, or, at least in my experience, in other places where people have been injected with a drug and that's a spiking.'*

R4: *'If someone's … buying lots of drinks for … one specific person, … it's sort of a spiking… not technically, but they are being given more drinks than they've asked for.'*

The experience of working in the NTE had taught respondents that spiking was more prevalent during busy nights and special events (e.g., Pride, Freshers, Halloween, Varsity, Christmas), as the following observations from Club FG2 reveal.

'Especially if there's like a big event happening, you just know that first aid room is going to be filled from people either being spiked… over drinking…'

'100% like when it comes to like seasonal events, so like Halloween, New Year's, freshers, Easter, those like peak seasonal period, that's when you see like a lot of it [spiking] happening … like even Security Guards can't watch everybody … and like I feel like the people that spike and do those things take advantage of the huge crowds.'

'Especially on busy nights when it is packed … you could maybe have… one person who's going around doing the spikings, but then you could have like 6 different women come up at different times and say oh… I've been spiked.'

Staff described several practical ways that spiking could be prevented, such as removing drinks that were unattended, using bar and security staff to watch drinks for women when they went to the bathroom or for a smoke, providing lids for drinks, and providing opportunities for testing. Bar staff tried to support customers by watching their drinks but did recognise that this was sometimes difficult.

Bar FG1: *'Upstairs people always ask like could you like watch my drink whilst I go out for a fag and we have a space at the end of the bar where we can watch them, but downstairs is a lot harder cause like, it gets busy and we're trying to watch the glass but work too.'*

The use of test kits was described as especially helpful, as a respondent in Club FG3 described: *'Once I've radioed it for security, I can then take the person into the back of the bar while they can talk to me... and then when security comes, I'll be there for them to relay that information to security and then we pass them on to security…. We have test kits, to test it out, so it's a thing of if you think your drink has been spiked, stop drinking it, pass it on to one of us, we will take it up to security with you and we'll test it out straight away. We have test kits for that, because we know that spiking is a very big thing... big spiking culture out here, so we know that.'*

Staff responses to allegations of spiking

In all venues providing alcohol, staff understood the protocols to follow if an allegation of spiking was made. Essentially, the person would be removed to a place of safety and the emergency services would be called. A Security Guard described the process:

'If you have a suspected spiking … you call that through [999] and then they'll initiate from their end… emergency services, so you'll have the Police usually and the ambulance attend and even if it's just an alleged and you're not 100% sure whether it's legitimate, you can put that in play particularly at the venue and their processes…soon as that 'S' word gets mentioned, immediately it's a phone call so that we put everything in place and then they will then deal with it from there.'

This protocol was consistent across all licenced venues, as shown in the description provided by a member of club staff.

Club FG1: *'So, staff are trained to pass it onto security, so they have a CCTV operator. So, if someone thinks they've been spiked or thinks their friend has been spiked, that person is then taken straight to a first aid room. We encourage them to hold onto their cup so that we can, we've got testing strips so we can test the drink, we then call 999 and the Police have operation… , I can't remember all the operations now, it's just changed to something else ..and then they are supposed to respond within two hours and they will come and do a urine sample, so we keep the person safe in first aid [room].'*

Thus, the study showed evidence of consistent practice across venues, and the strict following of protocols. This good practice was regarded as an outcome of the roll out of enhanced zero tolerance training within the city and Operation Lookout.

Best Practice: Operation Lookout

In the past, NTE venues often made localised decisions about whether spiking had occurred and took their own action (e.g., removing the person from the venue) rather than routinely calling the emergency services. This at times proved problematic and detrimental to subsequent police investigations and did not give a true reflection of the scale of the problem within the NTE.

Experienced officers suggested that the reluctance of venues to report was likely due to lack of understanding of what constitutes spiking by bar, club and door staff, as well as the fear of reputational damage.

Operation Lookout was established by Kent Police in response to the high number of alleged spiking cases in 2021 observed both nationally and locally.

Under Operation Lookout NTE venues were required to report all incidences of alleged spiking to the police. A response plan was developed outlining the clear processes that should be followed by bar, club and door staff. This enabled Kent Police to gain a richer understanding into the scale of the problem, better safeguard victims and optimise opportunities to collect any forensic evidence that would support the investigative process.

The study shows that these variable practices have been curtailed through collaboration between venues and the Police. This was acknowledged by a Sargent in FG4:

'The venues are now contacting the police, the police are responding to it and an investigation is created and then it goes to investigation officers. Whereas before we would lose people because they have been removed from the venue they are now been given the confidence and reassurance that we want to help... People not understanding different forms of spiking but once we explained to the venues they were like 'oh so they could appear drunk?' we are asking you to safeguard that potential victim until we arrive and since that decision has been taken from them [bar, club and door staff] they're a lot more confident.'

Despite strong protocols in relation to spiking, a few respondents suggested that the increasing numbers of incidents reflected the more common usage of the term and a growth in community concerns, rather than a real increase in incidence. For instance, it was suggested that some of the allegations of spiking were made when customers were just very drunk.

The inability for people to know whether they had really been spiked was more likely, the Police and NTE workers across all focus groups suggested, when people were new to drinking:

Police FG2: *'There are a lot of freshers that come down they are obviously far away from home; they've never drank as the quantity they're going to obviously they are trying to meet friends and impress people; you get a lot of freshers that obviously will drink beyond anything they've ever comprehended before. And obviously people will shout that they've been spiked and when they haven't, they just drank a lot of alcohol on an empty stomach.'*

Notwithstanding the real dangers of spiking, such observations indicate that there might be a propensity for some people to attribute their drunkenness to the intervention of others rather than their inability to track personal consumption.

Management of general intoxication by NTE workers

In terms of alcohol intake more generally, bar and club staff felt they had to take on the responsibility of saying 'no' on behalf of customers that they did not think were able to make rational choices or did not appear to have the confidence to refuse themselves. This laudable intervention was shaped by informal practices rather than taught protocols. As such, interventions to minimise drinking were dependent on workers having a level of confidence, not least because intervention could prompt negative and aggressive responses from the customers. Indeed, workers described how 'stepping in' to protect customers could render them vulnerable to abuse at work but might also extend beyond their shift and workplace. For example, staff reported being concerned that aggrieved customers might follow them home and pursue their grievance.

Bar staff used several strategies to safeguard customers and prevent the occurrence of harm. For instance, even in times when bars were busy, they removed drinks that had been left on the bar for an extended period, and engaged in monitoring who was buying and then consuming drinks. This included counting how many drinks each person in a party was drinking. If someone was buying multiple drinks and/or multiple measures, they were alert to the heightened risk and actively monitored consumption patterns. Practices included asking females who had been bought a drink to come to the bar area to collect it, so that their intoxication could be monitored and to ensure that they knew what was in their drinks.

Club FG2: *'A guy will come up and order like a row of shots or whatever drinks…. and then I've had … his friends look to me and say… what am I drinking? Because they have no idea* whatever he's just ordered for them, and I've made it, assuming everyone with him knows what's going on. So, I'm like, this is this drink… it's a single shot / double shot, because … you don't wanna be spiking someone.'

NTE staff also sometimes took the decision to help 'sober up' female customers:

Club FG2: *'Females come to the bar and I see that they're just too… like… drunk, I used to make them suck on a lime and drink water… like no one used to understand but the lime is so acidic that helps like almost sober you up for like a moment …like it cleanses you out… but now… we serve it in all the bars.'*

Practices also included monitoring and reducing intoxication in men, as violence is more likely to be perpetrated under the influence of alcohol. Respondents reported the observation of visible behaviours (e.g., poor motor control, attitude changes, confusion, getting them to provide simple information), for example.

Club FG2: 'Tell me your ABC's… Tell me the four ABC's…. if they mess up on their ABC's then you are like bro, just come on like drink some water come back and try again later cause then that way it's like you've failed yourself ... and then they don't really get aggy with you.'

Student bar staff described additional surveillance techniques such as noting changes in individual drinking habits (e.g., shift from beer to spirits) as this was regarded as atypical especially for students new to drinking and was seen as a red flag.

Whilst alcohol enabled customers to be 'merry', the workers were concerned that a culture of intoxication was prevalent. Excessive drinking was seen as the result of peer pressure amongst friends, or from being bought drinks by people outside of their friendship group – the latter an obligation that women felt more keenly. It was observed that women did not want to cause offence by saying 'no' to drinks. Moreover, it was recognised that many female customers could not always accurately track their consumption if drinks were being bought for them.

Club FG3: *'I feel sorry for a lot of females, cause [its] not like they're going out getting purposely drunk, but when a guy is like... let me buy you drink … you feel uncomfortable to say no so a lot of times you would just take the drink… and when that's happening to you like three, four, five times in the night, you go from having two drinks that you've paid for to … 10 drinks but you don't know… you don't even know where you've gotten those ten drinks from and they end up in the first aid room or end up crashing outside at McDonald's.'*

Supporting customers at risk of VAWG

The respondents were asked about how they knew whether customers needed help. Most of the participants were aware of formal national initiatives such as 'Ask Angela',

Club FG1: Female: *'Yes, if they come up to the bar, and ask for Angela, it means that they are in trouble and that their date has gone wrong, so you help them out.'*

Club FG2: Female *'Yeah, I think they, what is it now, the 'Ask Angela' is coming in handy a lot. I had a couple like one or two over like the past few months to come up to us and just said the words 'Angela, ask Angela' that's been quite helpful with lots of posters and stuff around, you kind of know to like act quick, and make sure they're okay and kind of get them away from whatever scenario that they're in, and obviously the bouncers get them into first aid.'*

TD1: *'There used to be this thing called 'Ask Angela' that was in the pubs, but we kind of made it public [to taxi drivers] and if you ask us, we will know something's wrong and then we can report it or whatever. But, you know, we nobody ever did. So, whether that was just the case, that they didn't know that they could. I mean, you know, I mean, obviously it's a private thing. So, you know, I've got no idea how many times, you know, a year somebody asked for Angela in pubs around Canterbury. I don't know, does it ever happen anymore?'*

Another participant from Club FG2 noted there were instances when the code word had been used and she and colleagues had acted with speed:

'Yeah, they've been for different scenarios sometimes like, one girl was discriminated against...cos... they were transgender, and she felt really like bullied and a bit vulnerable in certain situations, so she came up to me and another bar staff at the time and she just said, 'Ask Angela'. We took her away out the back., someone's used it because they thought they'd been spiked before, and there was also a female that was in a sticky situation with a man... ….I think he was just being a little bit too full on and she felt uncomfortable and she just said the 'ask Angela' word as we was just like walking by.'

The NTE workers who were unaware of this code word were males working in a fast food outlet, as a food courier and one member of bar staff. As this exchange in a Bar FG1 illustrates:

Male: *'Who's Angela?*

Female: *'She's not someone who works here!*

Male: *No, I have not heard about it.'*

Some level of confusion was articulated in the fast food focus group with male only respondents (FF1):

R1: *'Yeah, we have got something, I cannot remember the code name, Annie or something'.*

R2: *'Angela…. there are some posters around about it'.*

However, across all focus groups staff reported that the request for help by using the code of 'Ask Angela' was not used as often as they would expect, some describing it as used rarely in practice.

Club F3G, Female: *'I have never had someone ask if Angela is around…they actually tell you what this issue is.'*

It was observed that customers who needed help tended to ask for support directly rather than use official code words. The same respondent (Club FG3) described how customers would ask to speak to a manager, ostensibly with a complaint about their drink, but to broker the opportunity to share their concerns.

'Someone will say, can I speak to your Leader or your Manager, or who is in charge, I want to speak to them… they might say it's about their drink and their friends might go away….then when they are on their own, they say 'can I speak to you privately', I can then radio security.'

Staff made interesting observations about why 'Ask Angela' was not always used. First, they suggested that the widespread knowledge of this campaign was counterproductive and that customers would be fearful of being overheard. For example:

Club FG3, Male: *'It's going to sound cocky, but I think 'Ask Angela' is the stupidest thing ever…everyone knows the secret code name, it defeats the point of a secret code word…. you have it in the men's toilets, the women's toilets, so a girl cannot come up to you, and ask for Angela because everyone knows what it means.'*

Indeed, it was recognised that there was a value in advertising to customers that they should ask for an 'Angel Shot' to avoid the Angela association and enable a more careful and secretive opportunity to ask for assistance. Second, staff described a situation where 'Ask Angela' was a source of amusement. This type of behaviour minimised the value of this security measure in their view.

Bar FG2: *'There was one situation when a guy came to the bar and said, 'Is Angela around?' I think they had seen the posters and wanted to see how we would react, and all his friends were laughing, it was a dare.'*

The Police have tested the robustness of the 'Ask Angela' initiatives In NTE venues that have engaged in Zero Tolerance training. Their observations indicated that there were some venues that acted promptly whilst there were some that were required to strengthen their protocol as outlined by a sergeant in focus group 4:

'Once they've done the training, within three or four months, we'll go and visit them and question their staff. We'll do plain clothed operations where female officers are going in

plain clothes without any PPE…and then go and ask for Angela at the bar, which is one of the obviously campaigns that we've provided, just to see how the staff reacted. There was never any criticism, there was points of learning that came out.'

Considering that some of the venues are also designated safe havens, the need for consistent and accurate knowledge about this resource is also imperative. Certainly, some staff were aware of safe havens and would direct customers to McDonald's at closing time due to the security presence.

Club FG3: *'Oh, the best advice that we give to them – go straight to McDonalds'…. because McDonald's is secured by a lot Security Guards … and if anything were to happen, … the Security Guards there will protect you like they would diffuse it… like there was [an] incident when the kid got attacked, so what they did was they kept the kid inside and they just blocked off the doors like they stopped the doors from opening… until like the Police came and sorted it out, so I always tell people… if you feel unsafe, go straight to the McDonald's.'*

However, generally, NTE workers' knowledge about the safe havens was variable and many respondents were unclear where the havens were situated or how many there were.

Moreover, other respondents suggested that some of the designated safe havens were not actually that safe. They were concerned that some of the safe havens were situated in obscure places, in places that there overcrowded (hot spots) and were not always easy to access. As one volunteer explained:

SP: *'I guess the new Whitefriars is a kind of, Safe Haven, which is the stairwell next to Tesco's… it can be a safe environment, but we can't leave them all night on their own… Well, it's a safe environment because it's got the camera on it, but actually… it's not exactly a great place, a stairwell, and they on their own. Well, unless you're with them, but then you can't be there with them all night.'*

Moreover, to be safely delivered to a safe haven does not mean that harm is mitigated, as it often means that the response from the police can be downgraded. The Police acknowledged that this could exacerbate the problem and feelings of anxiety for the individual. Furthermore, the Police acknowledged this could have an unintended consequence if the public dismissed safe havens as a place of refuge. As such, they had continued to prioritise callouts:

Police FG6: 'So, we have established a working protocol now for the locations in Canterbury where if the alarm is raised and they are given that protection [protection within the safe haven], then the police will respond on an immediate risk basis, even though in theory, the risk is no longer immediate because we owe it to those victims to make sure that we take them into account, understand the circumstances quicker and then maybe seek the offender, whoever they are…so that's something that we have implemented jointly through police as well as working with the business improvement districts and Whitefriars and the actual structure…we've now got the CCTV and the door

entry system and a working protocol with our operators at night.'

A further issue was related to customer knowledge about safe havens. The Security Guards felt that women and girls did not know enough about safe spaces or how to locate them.

SG: *'.... the safer streets, the safety hubs we already have in play…we just have never really advertised them…. We've never really pushed it as far as I believe it could go.'*

Indeed, the security company had taken the initiative to advertise their own safety hubs to customers (linked to venues where their own guards worked), by creating posters on their social media sites, and circulating them on university campus.

Responses to potential instances of VAWG by NTE Workers

NTE workers understanding of VAWG and the link to alcohol and spiking instilled a moral responsibility for customer wellbeing. This responsibility extended beyond the statutory obligation to monitor intoxication as stipulated by S.141 of the Licensing Act, to include surveillance and checking of customer safety, as well as looking for predatory behaviours.

For example, respondents described how they would be vigilant of instances where women looked uncomfortable or distressed, when a male was thought to be watching a group of girls, when males were not socialising or were showing particular interest in women who were intoxicated, or indeed buying drinks for women who were not in their group and/or were visibly intoxicated.

They saw their role as incorporating both surveillance and reassurance.

Club FG3: *'Making someone aware that you are kind of looking at them…not just looking at whoever is looking a bit dodgy, but whoever they are with, so I always make sure that I am looking at the girls, if they are a little bit uncomfortable, I just give them a little ' are you ok' kind of hand signal…just to make them aware that I am looking at them and not just looking at the dodgy guy that is with [them], but looking at the girl to make sure [she] is okay'….I am watching you, 'you good'? Come over if you need anything!'*

Staff reported that during this surveillance process they looked for people exhibiting 'odd' behaviours, for example, a lone male watching females,

Club FG2: *'I see someone just…standing alone … [I'll] be like, okay…what's this individual up to? What they wanna do? Go ask them, like, are you OK? Are you feeling better? Like they could be not feeling well…if I find it suspicious, I'd be like, OK, I'm gonna let my manager know… this needs to be sorted out so they can call up security team and the security can deal with them.'*

They described situations that simply did not 'feel quite right', and in these cases intervention was often deemed necessary.

Club FG2: *'I have a someone in front of me who's obviously being very dodgy…*

whether it's a male or a female, and then I radio with the description… So, the person that is kind of like overseeing CCTV can communicate between bar and door staff, and they'll come up to the bar and then they'll ask me like, who is it … and … they'll pull them to like, a quieter area to … ask them questions and kind of figure out what is going on.'

Sometimes, their concerns were raised if a woman did not seem able to manage a situation:

Club FG2: *'There's this female that is obviously clearly intoxicated and the guy's getting really touchy onto her… obviously I can see that she's feeling uncomfortable or lying. She can't even tell what's going on cause she's that drunk.'*

A Security Guard described the techniques she used to alert her to danger:

'I mean so, you could be looking for any number of things like looking for 'intox' people that are getting aggressive, people that are hiding in shadowy little corners. I mean, it could be anything, depending on what you're looking for. I mean, you'd be looking at regular trips to the toilets and things like that and certain individuals and how they're behaving around certain people, but if you were monitoring people and from the aspect of safety for females, you'd be looking for anyone that I'd be predominantly looking at, is male with the female, the females intoxicated or plying them with drinks….. unsolicited sort of attention or unwanted attention, or just in general standing there staring at groups of females or... you know... potentially inappropriate stuff.'

Taxi drivers described how they would attentively watch passengers and would adopt a conversational and inquisitive approach if they were concerned about a woman's safety. This approach served to draw information out of passengers whilst also offering the driver an element of 'friendly' protection.

TD1: *'When there's a male and a female and the female's not feeling very well, I usually sort of casually question the relationship of the male and the female, whether the male is going back to her house. Whether they are boyfriend, girlfriend or whether they're just friends, how long have they known each other? You know, I'll just casually talk to them and just sort of say things like, oh, are you guys together then? And if they say if he says, yeah. Or she says, yeah. If she says yeah I'm more believing it. But if he says yeah, I'll still question it a little bit more and just sort of say, oh, like, how long have you guys been together then? Oh, what, what nice places have you taken her to then, you know? And just to try and dig a little bit to make sure that he is with her and they know each other. I wouldn't want the thought of someone who doesn't know her very well taking her home and then getting into her house and doing whatever he likes, you know, and I've actually had people that have got in my car, I've questioned them and I've realised that they've only just met. I then dropped off the female at her house and made it quite clear to him that he can see her to the door, but he's not going in and I will take him on to somewhere else.'*

As these observations suggest, tactics to manage these situations were usually instinctive, rather than rooted in training – described as basic human empathy.

Club FG2: *'Sometimes as a human being you can kind of see when someone just doesn't feel safe.'*

Staff reported that they also used strategies to help to de-escalate situations where VAWG might occur. For instance, they might seek to make a lone male aware he was visible to staff through engaging him in conversation,

Club FG2: *'The best thing to do to stop a perpetrator … Just make them aware that you know they're there… just be like, oh, are you good? … How's your night going? The moment they noticed that … he's watching me, they kind of like stop being…suspicious.'*

As a Street Pastor also explained: *'Sometimes we see men being a bit heavy headed and I will say 'everything okay' in an effort to get a conversation going, if I am thinking there is a situation building, I try and diffuse it a bit. Prevention is always much, much better.'*

Taxi drivers explained incidences where they have challenged males to reconsider their actions as a means of intervention and prevention:

TD2: *'I normally just say to them I say, look you really don't know this girl, you really don't want to take a drunk girl into a house on your own. She could say anything tomorrow and you could be in jail. It makes the guy think that maybe this isn't such a good idea because obviously, normally. Guys are thinking this is going to be an easy situation for him to take advantage [of the girl] and then once you have a few things pointed out to him, they normally do back off and say, oh no, I appreciate that. If you want to take me home afterwards, that would be good.'*

NTE workers described being on high alert to risk, carefully observing instances where trouble appeared to be brewing. Again, a Street Pastor's observation is illustrative:

'Oh, you get… groups start following females around everywhere and they can't get rid of them or they're hanging behind them we kind of, watching what they're doing. And our teams have kind of… ….walked up to them saying 'oh, hi how are you doing' you know, and finally getting into at the nearest pub just to make sure they're in the same space and then called the Police [to] say that- or the cameras to say that 'these guys are following them, can you keep an eye on them?' but it's kind of like… Intercepting those… females that may- may seem on their own, but then you know they've got these people tailing them.'

Other staff explained that they would seek to engage a female verbally or non-verbally or use ploys (e.g., do you want a free shot), to help move them away from encounters they regarded as risky.

Club FG2: *'I had an incident where a girl was ... surrounded by … two boys and you can see she was uncomfortable, so I … pretended 'oh, do you wanna take like a free shot, we're doing like a promo thing'… just to get her out of that situation…and like she was thankful for it.'*

Unlike the responses to allegations of spiking which were bound by strong protocols, respondents' responsibility for customer wellbeing and their cognition of the risk of VAWG emanated from their own perceptions of risk, drawn from their own lived experiences and moral codes. This meant that staff responses were individual and personal, but also varied by gender and level of experience.

Respondents who were less experienced in the role, or junior in the organisation, were less likely to take initiative, preferring to check in with a manager or Security Guard to ask for their advice. In contrast, more senior staff had developed their own strategies to de-escalate and could use their age to their advantage. For instance, an older member of the Street Pastor team was described as having the confidence to intervene in altercations.

'One of the most experienced Street Pastors is fantastic…. all her life experience is used in different situations…. men who are spoiling for a fight, the couple falling out…. it's all about using life experiences and core sense.'

Security Guards too, with longer periods of service, had learned the value of 'simmering down' situations, sometimes using humour to change the tempo.

'Most important thing is a sense of humour, we try and get them for a split second to stop thinking about hitting each other…when you've got their brain switched even for a split second you have won….then you can start talking them down……so, 'I think I am rather good looking and I don't like being punched' – is a line… or I get in between two people wanting to fight and the first thing I tell them is 'I'm fat'!'

Overall, levels of vigilance and intervention varied as they were rooted in personal confidence, and this produced inconsistent practice. All staff indicated that they had had minimal training on this aspect of the work, typically relying on gut instincts and personal experience as a user and worker in the NTE.

As a Street Pastor observed: *'I guess if you're out there, you know, quite on a regular basis, then you kind of, get to know, kind of, the atmosphere of the city and kind of you do pick up on those subtle differences ….. where you get a sense of predatory males that are around in the city.'*

The Police also referred to using instinctual judgement to alert them to potentially dangerous situations and predatory behaviour:

Police FG1: *'I stand outside some of the night clubs and you will see something, like a fully grown man, when I say fully grown, I mean 40-50 years old, on his own, and does not look like he is dressed to go out, talking to women who clearly don't want to be spoken to and clearly do not want to be engaged with, but he persists in engaging them, essentially pissing them off.'*

However, the absence of formal training in how to spot when people were in difficulty meant that sometimes NTE workers were reluctant to intervene in what they perceived as domestic altercations or interpersonal issues. For example, there was evidence that it was sometimes deemed safer to take a bystander approach for fear of negative consequences for themselves. In this example, described by staff in Club FG1, the staff did not immediately intervene but did pass on their concerns:

R1: *'There was some girl, I was walking past her…I walked past her first'*

R2: *'Yeah, we were all walking past her'*

R3: *'She had a boy in front of her and she was kissing him and she was grabbing my arm, like really, really tight. I walked past her and didn't really think that she was grabbing my arm and then X [name of colleague] walked behind me and she was saying something to X'*

R2: *'We didn't know what to do, we don't know what that is'*

R3: *'It was a sticky situation because she looked quite genuinely into this boy, we didn't really know what to do so we went to our supervisor he pulled her aside and the bouncers*

came. She did actually need a little bit of help she was in a vulnerable situation but sometimes it's just hard to tell isn't it.'

Summary

The study revealed that whilst almost all respondents could describe what was meant by VAWG, their understanding was inconsistent. In contrast, a strong knowledge of spiking was exhibited. Similarly, there was good evidence that venues had strong protocols in place when spiking was alleged, and workers knew what was expected of them. Respondents, overall, were also well versed in the national strategies such as 'Ask Angela', although there was some concern about their usefulness, a concern that extended, for some, to the operation of safe havens.

The research suggests the need for clearer advertisement of support and an appraisal of what sort of street-based support would be most effective. Interestingly, in other areas (e.g., Northampton, see College of Policing, 2023) the provision of a clearly marked 'Safer Night Out Van' has been useful for tackling vulnerability, providing a more visible and immediate place of safety. Therefore, visible and clearly signposted muster points might be a way to support users and workers within the NTE.

Many respondents drew on their own moral codes when taking the decision to intervene in instances of potential violence or when they felt people were at risk of excessive alcohol intake. This intervention was shaped by personal confidence levels and intuition. Much of the training that was described by professionals within all elements of the night-time economy was informal. Unanimously, all respondents described their management of evening risks as 'going with their gut': an instinctual response derived from life experience. They could 'sense' when situations were awry and drew on several mechanisms to maintain equilibrium. Overall, there was a call for more training on how to identify potential predatory behaviour and this was across all occupations from bar staff, taxi drivers through to the Police and to Security Guards, as explored in the next section.

4.2
Training and training needs.

Existing research on bouncers has provided some examination of training programmes. Lister and colleagues (2000) showed that training varied by county, tended to cover criminal, civil, and licencing law, fire safety, first aid and social conduct, and had to be paid for privately by bouncers. However, this work is now somewhat dated. While Police training is well established, little is known about the training needs of other NTE workers.

The focus groups established that NTE workers are often bystanders to abuse, harassment, spiking incidences and sexual violence. Moreover, they were often in a position where they could help to identify and disrupt patterns of abuse and perpetration and could play a vital role in the safety of women and the wider public at night. However, as we have noted, much of their knowledge and understanding was derived from personal experience and this resulted in inconsistencies in their approach when faced with the realities of VAWG within the workplace.

It was important to explore the extent and type of formal training that was available in the sector, NTE worker evaluations of this training, and the training gaps they could identify.

Formal Training

Respondents explained that much of their training was delivered with a focus on competencies that centre on 'doing the job' and protecting the employer. This included legal obligations related to licensing laws and health and safety. For fast food workers training programmes primarily focused on service delivery, whilst bar and club staff also noted some training associated (although minimal) with preventing alcohol-related problems such as the preventing and handling of aggression from patrons.

Across all the focus groups, there were examples of training focused on conflict resolution, fire safety and first aid. However, it was noted that, with the exception of bouncers and private Security Guards, this training was only offered to more senior staff members, such as team leaders, supervisors, managers and workers that had been within the organisation for a significant period.

A greater focus on the safeguarding of patrons was observed at clubs and bars linked with universities, where staff were also often students themselves. This included safeguarding training and mechanisms for checking staff competencies on an annual basis. Here, a respondent from Club FG3 describes her experience.

'We've got some safeguarding training. We've got some fire safety training. We have to do the training every year. It's a requirement. You can't skip it. We do it every year because they go through everything. We have a little checklist. So, every year you have to go through it. If you don't understand it…you don't tick it and you don't sign it and the managers will go through it in detail with you as an individual...'

The emphasis on the nature and frequency of training, in particular the inclusion of safeguarding training observed at university associated clubs and bars, is likely a consequence of universities regulatory obligations under the provisions of the Office for Students and related Statement of Expectations for preventing harassment and sexual misconduct. All staff that had received a form of safeguarding training found it beneficial in enhancing their understanding and ability to identify potentially vulnerable individuals, and to better know when to alert security staff and provide a safer night out for patrons.

Safeguarding training was also noted to be part of the training received by taxi drivers however, this was deemed to be a 'tick box' exercise as a condition of licencing rather than a mechanism to empower drivers to identify, tackle and report incidences of VAWG. Moreover, this training was only required once, and the lack of a formal renewal process means that drivers may not necessarily be aware of changing and emerging trends in relation to VAWG as described by TD1:

'This is part of the Council's procedure for obtaining a badge, so we have to do safeguarding training and that's kind of awareness of potentially vulnerable passengers…at the moment it's almost like a box ticking exercise. Yeah, we do, drivers do safeguarding training, but once that's out of the way, they've got the certificate who's to say they're actually applying it, whether there's any kind of way they feel like it's relevant, whether they actually notice things… I don't think they do need to renew it. It's like it's a box ticking thing. When you first get your licence and there's no expiry date on it… you never have to revisit it again.'

Across all focus groups with bars, clubs and food couriers, there was also an imperative to avoid breaking the law by providing alcohol to those who were underage, with training systematically offered on licencing laws. The food courier noted that this was the only training he had received:

'So, I have had training about alcohol and age, as you could be [put] in prison and there is a hefty fine….in a way, they do not want to lose their licence.'

For some club and bar staff, this level of training was deemed more than sufficient, as they did not want to be involved in restoring order, seeing this as the preserve of security staff.

Club FG3: *'We're here to do a job and not to be treated like absolute rubbish and I feel like the training we got in over here at [name of venue] has helped us learn that….we can like advise security on, say, we've seen something that you may have not seen, just keep an eye on it….Like if a situation where females .. like females are sometimes bullied into buying alcohol from males like we've seen it …'*

Best Practice: Zero Tolerance Training

Zero Tolerance is an accredited training scheme aimed at licenced venues that is offered by Canterbury Bid to businesses in Canterbury City Centre. The aim of the training is to empower workers to recognise and tackle sexual harassment and discrimination and covers spiking and a wider agenda on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The 2 hour workshops are delivered by a facilitator appointed by Canterbury BID and take place in person in a 'Train the Trainer' format to enhance sustainability and enable managers and owners within the NTE to train and support their staff in recognising and addressing VAWG and non-gendered harassment and discrimination.

The scheme was first established within Canterbury in collaboration with the Students' Union at the University of Kent, and Kent Police in response to the increase in complaints from female staff regarding unwanted attention from male students.

The scheme has grown rapidly and filtered into the wider community through a number of collaborative partners that include Kent Police, Canterbury BID, Canterbury City Council and Canterbury District Partnership. Within Canterbury there are now 24 venues that have received and been accredited under the Zero Tolerance scheme.

The training also incorporates the 'Ask for Angela' campaign and provides some guidance on what workers should do should they be approached by a customer. The training provides opportunities for bar, pub and club staff to reflect on what actions they have taken in the past to address VAWG and their knowledge of some of the associated national data (although this is limited).

Within the Zero Tolerance packs disseminated to workshop participants it states:

'The Zero Tolerance campaign aims to combat this culture of acceptance of harassment and thereby tackle the high levels of sexual harassment. Our goal is to give licensed premises guidelines and frameworks for how to combat sexual harassment'

However, there has been no formal evaluation on the impact of this training on understanding of VAWG and how NTE workers have incorporated the training into their daily operations. Within this study it was noted, that NTE workers that bars and night clubs that had received Zero Tolerance training were somewhat more able to provide a more rounded definition of VAWG than those that did not. The same could not be said for fast-food workers.

Overall, it is evident that zero tolerance training has provided some foundational knowledge for NTE workers that have accessed the workshop.

The Police were very positive about the levels of legislative training they had received, viewing it as both extensive and informative:

Police FG1: *'So, I think the initial training when you first become a Police Officer, I think that's quite good … I remember it goes through different legislations and different offences and it sort of builds in with stuff like actual cases, so you can learn about it beforehand. And then as you go on in your sort of career, you'd have the sort of like continuing development and sort of training sessions and meet with speakers from different teams to give you more training about it... I think I probably have had sort of people talking about sex offences, probably about once, once a year, one training session a year, which is normally feel like a couple of hours before your shift. You have a speaker come in, talk to you about any changes and how it's about investigated or the following changes in policy that we need to be aware of.'*

However, some Police Officers noted that much of the training that they had received in relation to VAWG largely focused on domestic abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, and forced marriages. There was limited or no training that addressed VAWG more widely, or within public spaces. As such, the Police reported that they drew on knowledge obtained during their time studying at university or previous experience in other professions. This was particularly evident with junior officers who had not had significant operational experience, as highlighted in the following responses from the two officers from different focus groups:

Police FG1: *'I did a degree long time ago… and I have worked with sex offenders mostly paedophiles, so I do have experience before the Police in terms of violence against women and girls… A lot of my initial degree focused on rape, how that is trailed at court, how people report helps with bigger crimes… When it comes to victim engagement, I think I try to remember what I've learned previously.'*

Police FG2: *'You don't really get taught about it [VAWG more generally and in public spaces], I mostly learned about it when I was in university about three years ago, you learn a lot about it then. I haven't really heard about that since being in the Police. I learned a lot about it at university.'*

The absence of Police training relating specifically to VAWG was also outlined in the conversation between officers in FG3:

R1: *'No specific training in relation to violence against women".*

'R2: *'It's one of our force priorities. So, on our home Internet thing, there's always a spotlight which we call them sort of providing information about violence against women and girls. I'm just trying to think if we've had any ... An online training package against it, but I don't know that we have to be honest. It's basically highlighted through our Internet as a priority that we have to pay attention to.'*

Gaps in formal training

Consequently, several gaps in training were identified. A consistent finding was that formal training was regarded as being too brief and insufficiently engaging, especially when delivered asynchronously online.

Security Guards, in particular, were concerned that they were often first responders, effectively operating as an informal Police Officer but with a fraction of the training that Police Officers could access. Whilst their own training had increased from 2 days to 6 days, the educational programme was described as woefully inadequate.

'I think very little training really is given, you know, when you look at what they expect door staff to deal with, it is effectively the first thing that the Police would deal with. You know, the Police spend a year, maybe training before they actually go out.....whereas we spend 6 days and then we're expected to deal with knives, drugs, weapons, people trying to kill themselves, all kinds of different aspects of this job that... .... that realistically you can't contain in six days.'

They thought they could benefit from the restraint training that is mandatory for Police Officers.

'Restraint… I think it would be more extensive on the physical aspect of it because it's a lot of talking … but the actual bit that we need when it goes really, really, wrong is a day and a half and in all honesty, it's not the best programme that's out there. The Police's training…is… so much better but you have to go outside of the course to do that. You can't teach that in the SIA approved standard of teaching.'

Importantly, there was a recognition that VAWG was not a formal component in any training.

As one Street Pastor observed: *'Actually, we did do some role-playing, but that was more around what happens when there is an aggressive situation, there was nothing specifically on domestic violence.'*

Taxi drivers expressed that the formal training that they had received was very limited and had little to no insight into VAWG and how to address it. They also noted that their training did not take into consideration the unique challenges that they might encounter in the NTE compared to their daytime colleagues:

TD2: *'It's very limited, they just basically say if you overhear conversations that sound dodgy then obviously report it to the police, that's about as far as it goes... I think to be a night driver is totally different than being a day driver. During the day, you're taking kids to school, you're taking grannies shopping, you're taking people to their doctor's appointments, people to work in the morning late in the afternoon, taking them home. It's a totally different environment to people that have had alcohol that are out on the night out to enjoy themselves, where they're letting their hair down, people are a lot more carefree, I suppose vulnerable.'*

The Police also indicated that they did have some training gaps, especially in relation to *VAWG:*

Police FG1: *'Yeah, I mean the initial training that all Police Officers do is very much legislative training. So, you understand the law and the various aspects of the law. And that will include elements of sexual offences in terms of violence against women and girls*

and street crime if you like, and misogyny and those offences you get over the night-time economy, such things as drink spiking…. but we don't really deal with the day-to day…. Then I would say that the level of training we receive is … ahh, little to none … I can't think of the time when we had a training course on it.'

The training courses that were available were critiqued. In particular, the Police Officers did not value training that had to be undertaken online and in their own time.

Police FG1: 'A lot of our training is delivered in electronic format, so if it's deemed that we need refresher training on elements of the law, including perhaps night-time economy, then they would develop electronic training for us to do in our own time…so in my own time in the computer … so, the delivery of that, and what you can get from that can be quite poor because it relies on officers being attentive during that delivery. And if you're looking at that computer-based delivery at the final thirty minutes of your shift, the chances are you're pressing the enter button quicker than you've played arcade games. So. Um, yeah, II think it's fair to say that the amount of training officers receives in terms of night-time economy, and perhaps those what I call street offences that occur on the night-time economy, is minimal to none'.

A view corroborated in other focus groups:

Police FG2: *'Pointless. And pointless everywhere. Like, not even just Police online training all online training is pointless. And there's been studies to show that nobody ******* learns from it … so, pointless waste of time… waste of money…'*

Overall, much of the training on VAWG was gained through doing the job:

Police FG1: *'The training the officers receive is generally through experience and during their initial two years' probation. So, when they are on that two-year probation, although it has changed in recent years, you will go out with experienced officers. You generally want to think that's not always the case and that experience will teach you sort of what to look for in a night-time sort of duty and what you might experience on that. So, I suppose really, it's training on the job as opposed to training in the classrooms.'*

Respondents who worked in security and in bars and clubs wanted to have more formal training based on how to predict violence and recognise perpetrators and those at risk, rather than having to rely on their own gut feelings. As a Security Guard explained:

'Profiling people and characterising certain behaviours, looking more extensively into the why someone might be acting in that way…how are you ever gonna catch someone spiking someone unless you are razor eyes…I think if there was training that identified human behaviour because, you know, I can't remember correct term for it, but I know there's some kind of training or background where you can… it teaches you certain things about people's body language, and demeanour… that's a bit more extensive than what we get taught and might be a good way of being able to get the guys to understand that there is someone that we need to look out for.'

It is important to also note that Security Guards, who felt the need for more training most keenly, had also paid out of their own pockets to fill their knowledge gaps.

'I did a workshop around women's personal safety …I was looking at like studies about … people who have been convicted for like sexual things … and … how they profiled their victim, … and I gained a better understanding from doing that, but I shouldn't have to go and do that myself. It's a massive part of doing this job.'

Summary

The study found variations in workers' knowledge, confidence and understanding of VAWG and this was in part due to the level of training that they had received and what the training covered. The turnover of staff has an impact on access to training and it is important to audit both take-up and the consistency of the training that is offered to club and bar staff.

There was some evidence of good practice regarding formal training, but respondents identified notable gaps in their expertise, especially around VAWG, and many felt compromised as a result. It was recognised that working in the NTE brought challenges that merited bespoke training.

4.3

Working in the Night-Time Economy

Working in the Night-Time Economy

The NTE workers were keen to share their experiences of work, and found the focus groups to be extremely valuable, a space where their voices could be heard. The Police especially found the focus groups to be a useful opportunity to learn more from one another.

The focus groups explored the extent to which people felt safe at work and collated detail about the types of risks workers had to navigate. In line with previous literature, the study revealed that sexual violence was an everyday, 'expected' experience for workers who are employed at night, and, moreover, such behaviour was often tolerated rather than reported.

Feelings of Safety at Work

The overwhelming consensus was that the workers generally felt safe at work and were very aware and appreciative of the support and care of their employers. Club managers were described as always on hand, highly aware of the risks associated with working at night. They sometimes helped their staff with transport home when asked and, in one case, routinely gathered all staff together at the end of a night shift to share experiences and debrief about issues that had arisen. Indeed, when facilitated, this informal mutual support was regarded as essential for wellbeing.

Bar FG1: *'At the end of the night we all sit on the sofa…it's like half three and everyone's tired and [the manager's] like we've done like a good night tonight well done…. we made this much… anyone need a lift…Oh, did you see that [woman] today? She was so tiring… after we've clocked off … those little vents…. kinda clears your mind… It's cathartic.'*

Street Pastors explained that their safety was rooted in the fact that they always worked in groups: 'I thought I would feel unsafe, but being in a group, we never leave anyone behind.'

Indeed, beyond support offered by managers, the workers extolled the value of fellow workers within the venue or within the broader NT community. Security Guards at venues enhanced feelings of safety:

Bar FG1: *'I don't feel unsafe because there's always a security person walking around like popping their head round and stuff like that.'*

Club FG3: *'Where we feel like, if we're in danger, the radio is connected to security as well. So, if we feel like we're in danger, we feel like any of our staff members are in danger…. It's our job to tell security straight away and security will move that person straight away.'*

Indeed, on evenings where less Security Guards were employed, safety felt compromised:

It was evident that informal social networks were central to safety, with workers explaining how they would always approach private Security Guards and other workers if they felt at risk. This was particularly evident for those club staff who also spent part of their shift on the street promoting their venue. The networks were described as essential to their safety as a formal Police presence was not always evident to them.

However, both male and female bar and club workers described incidences where they felt unsafe, as outlined by one club staff member:

Club FG2: *'At the end of the day, we just have to look at them and smile back. That's all you can do. I remember one of my worst experiences, it was when I first started, one girl forgot her jacket and then she came back and she got p****d. She took a picture of me and video called her boyfriend and then she was like 'this is the guy that needs to be killed'. I was like OK and then she said to him 'I'm sending you a picture, just make sure deal with it'. I'm literally standing there. I was like, I didn't do anything, you just forgot your jacket, how is that my issue? I didn't know what to do, I also ended up in tears at that point.'*

Much insecurity emanated from these abusive interactions, especially for women.

The Gendering and Normalisation of Sexual Violence

Whilst cultural values and expectations about the acceptability of sexual violence might have been subject to reappraisal in recent years, the focus groups vividly displayed that a situation of stasis prevailed within the NTE.

Female staff reported that during work they had encountered sexualised behaviours from customers, including comments, asking for phone numbers, touching of intimate areas of the body as well as physical and verbal violence, including being threatened with rape.

As a member of the Club FG1 described: *'There was this one guy.... he kept like leaning over the bar and like touching my hand and stuff.... sometimes guys will be like oh what time do you finish, I'll buy a prosecco bottle on my way outside and we can go back to mine and stuff.'*

In Club FG3, another illustrative example was given: *'I've had two different customers jump through the window on top of me trying to punch my head in, threatening to kill me… because I've not given them their coats back… I've been groped… I've been harassed for my number…'*

Female respondents noted that they felt particularly vulnerable when their work included walking the streets to promote the venue, where an emphasis upon provocative sexuality was expected – the wearing of scant clothing, flirting with prospective male customers, for instance. Here, a member of Club FG1 describes her experience:

'I feel like there is much more violence when out on the street…I feel like I'm being personally attacked…I have men, when I am out flyering and doing my job.'

Male participants wanted to emphasise that they too were targeted by female clients and experienced verbal and physical abuse, groping of intimate areas of their body and harassment to provide their phone number.

A male club worker [Club FG3] described how he had been subjected to inappropriate behaviour, but felt he had to tolerate the unwanted attention as part of his duty to ensure customers were having a good time.

'My shirt was ripped because all the older women were just kind of grabbing me and pulling at me while I was out around the floor… it's really hard to stay calm when… at the end of the day, it's like work uniform and they're vandalising it… but also it's hard to stay calm because it's attention that you don't want… but you will have to try and maintain this … facade for like their experience sake'.

This experience was not a one-off example: other male workers at the same venue had analogous examples.

'I've had like a woman that was so like attached to me, we were all closing… and she just wouldn't let go of my arm… like she was constantly like I wanna take you home… wanna do this… she wouldn't let me go…[we] had to get like a whole like Security Guard, just take her out.'

'Last week, I had a girl try to spit at me, because I didn't want to interact with her. I've had a female try to grope me just as I'm on the dance floor just trying to clean up. I had a girl literally try to grab my bum, try to do a whole strip dance on my mop as I'm trying to clean…. had a girl at the bar tried to grab my face to kiss me whilst I'm literally just trying to serve…'

Interestingly, when male workers detailed such incidences, they noticeably accompanied the narratives with much laughter, perhaps to mask their distress and present themselves as unscathed. Moreover, because they 'laughed off' unwanted attention while at work, the workers reported that it was assumed by customers that they enjoyed this type of interaction.

It should be noted that the Police too reported that abuse was also a ubiquitous feature of their profession and was something they had learned to accept. Indeed, they described feeling compelled to ignore remarks and physical assault while in uniform, as responding might further escalate the situation. Here, a male Police Officer describes a situation when a female invaded his personal space.

Police FG1: *'Yeah, I've had my arse slapped before. And ... I just didn't know what I just thought. I didn't know what to do cause… I can't get angry about it like it might invite…. Personally, I couldn't do anything about it. I just had to walk away. Um, but yeah… And they were drunk as well. ….. I think if I wasn't in uniform... I would probably stick up for myself a little bit more…And… I don't know why, why I wouldn't in in uniform it's just…I felt very uncomfortable at the time because I didn't know how to react as a Police Officer, I did know how to react as me... before being in the Police… Whatever…But as a as a Police Officer, you don't really get taught that like even as a female or a male, we don't really get taught... about how to react to those sort things?'*

Overall, there was an acceptance that poor, unsocial, aggressive, and sexualised behaviour was an unavoidable feature of the night-time leisure industry and night-time policing. These experiences intersected by gender. While both male and female bar and club staff experienced abuse, women described how much of the abuse they received was aimed at their physical appearance. Similarly, while male private security staff, on denying entry to a venue, might be threatened with physical assault, the female guards explained how they were regularly threatened with rape, and this felt particularly disconcerting:

R1: *'The abuse you get as a woman is very different, it's very sexual like it... I've had a male threaten to rape me and come back and they're gonna rape me and they're gonna do this and they're gonna do that like it's not the same abuse that you would get if you were a man because, for some weird reason, it's almost like it's weird for them to threaten to hit a girl, but it's OK for them to threaten to rape a woman, like it's a very weird sort of situation.'*

R2: *'Yeah… I would much rather be punched in the face than have a man tell me he is going to rape me, that sort of thing is really creepy.'*

What was striking was not simply the level of abuse that was reported, but the acceptance that such experiences were to be expected. The normalisation of violence and the normalisation of sexual threats was reported in all the focus groups that involved paid staff.

Additionally, the research revealed the racialisation of abuse, an unacceptable experience more commonly experienced by men, although this may reflect the demographics of the sector. As a Security Guard explained:

'It's almost like you're expected to take that kind of abuse you know like, like, a lot of our, you know, our black colleagues, the amount of stuff that I hear said to them, which to be honest the people should be arrested, you know, without a question and it's almost like it, it's just brushed aside, you know, and it shouldn't be, and it's just... it's something that we all experience.'

The food courier recounted his experience: *'As a black person you get verbal abuse as well, you know, people shouting the 'N' word…it's horrible….it makes you sad.'*

Accept, Report or De-escalate?

Not only was sexual violence a regular experience, but there was also little evidence to suggest that it was challenged.

Both female and male respondents described not feeling able to say 'no' or 'stop' when subjected to unwanted verbal and physical threats, as this typically, in their experience, only served to escalate inappropriate behaviour.

Club FG3: *'Flat out rejection typically is like a shortcut to aggression, in my experience.'*

There were several strategies that bar and club workers would use to avoid escalation, particularly when managing sexual advances from clientele. For example, they might give out some personal details or appear to comply with the request.

Club FG2: *'I … give them my Instagram because I couldn't care less about my Instagram… if they ask for my number, I'll change one number in the thing… if they say we're calling and it's not working… I'm like… I don't have service here… I don't have my phone…so then they feel like they've gotten what they wanted and then they go.'*

Other tactics included, blaming management for their refusal to share personal information:

Club FG3: *'I've been harassed for my number… My one is always oh, there's cameras watching... My boss won't like it… My boss will sack me if I give you my number.'*

Abuse was regarded as so normal that toleration, rather than formal reporting, was the preferred response. Some of the Police Officers suggested that they too chose not to formally report their own experiences of physical and verbal abuse, not least because the paperwork was described to be too unwieldy.

Police FG2: *'I can't speak for everyone, obviously. But I know a lot of officers, unless it's a really bad assault... you bled or somebody spat on, they won't bother reporting it because it's just not worth the ******* paperwork. If we were to go out tonight, I was grabbed by someone, punch me in the face, even if getting drunk assaulted, I can't be ******* to write a statement... get somebody else to investigate in the morning. That will take their mate hours... . It's not worth your ****** time.'*

Peer support

Female NTE workers tended to draw on the informal support of fellow workers and private Security Guards in situations when they felt threatened. Having a mix of male and female workers was deemed essential by workers of all genders. For instance, female private Security Guards found they were more successful in breaking up male to male altercations, and often drew on gendered behaviour to de-escalate:

'I think it really helps having the opposite sex dealing with an incident - fluttering your eyelashes at a bloke.... it does work … and when there is a woman in the middle [of a fight], it's quite successful... they think...I don't want to hurt a woman.'

In contrast, men were seen to be better placed to deal with disruptive females.

'If I [female] was working with [a male colleague] and a female kicks off, it's better for him to go in and deal than me, whereas if a bloke is kicking off, it's easier for me to go in and diffuse it that way, and you know, take them to one side. It does diffuse situations by having the opposite sex dealing with you.'

The growth in the number of female Security Guards was seen to be a very positive step. For this female club worker, female security staff were more likely to understand her experience as a woman working in this environment:

'Having a female Security Guard who's in charge of everyone tends to be a bit more comforting in my opinion, and I think other people probably agree on …there's certain things that [names of male Security Guards] not be able to understand, may not be able to understand as male, X [name of female Security Guard] could potentially pick up on and take a bit more seriously.'

Navigating work and home

In addition to discussion about the risks that had to be navigated while 'at work', several respondents also described how such threats followed them home. First, there were

concerns about getting home after work, with great efforts made to travel home with fellow workers, choose safe routes, and not park too far from the venue. Indeed, the absence of cheap or free parking in the centre of the town was regarded as a significant threat to safety.

When female workers chose to walk, they kept keys in their hands to act as a weapon, pretended to be on the phone, and one described how she felt she needed to buy a spray.

Bar FG2: *'To be honest, when I'm walking in night-time, I'm putting my keys in between my fingers. I know that it's silly but maybe that will support me, somehow. You know, if I have the fight then probably, I will stand a chance... But yeah, it is scary. So, I [would] rather that now I'm not protecting myself. Any case, I was thinking actually, and I spoke with my parents, because I have seen a video, it was maybe a month ago about the spray, the pink spray. So, if somebody will attack you, you cannot use any like weapon or anything like that in England. But uh, if somebody will attack you, you can spray them with the pink spray so at least the Police will know who they are looking for.'*

On some nights, when female workers did not feel safe enough to walk home, they would call a taxi, noting that they had to use an hour's worth of their earnings.

Bar FG2: *'Like even right now I'm uh, finishing at 1130, but even 10 o'clock it's still dark outside and I'm just living in X [name of Street] on the other end [of Canterbury]. But it takes me 30 minutes to walk. And like my friend, she asked me yesterday, she was like, oh uh, are you walking home? I was like, yeah. And she was like, are you serious? I was like, yeah, why? Oh, it's so dark. Are you not afraid? And then I start thinking like, actually I am, so I took a taxi home.'*

However, sometimes taking a taxi also felt risky, as another respondent from Bar FG2 explained.

'Yes, I have to get a taxi. Well at the moment I'm getting taxis home at half 11 and I've been in a situation where I feel uncomfortable. Um, even in a taxi where you should feel safest and they're asking questions like, what did you do? How old are you? Do you have a boyfriend? … It makes you feel really uncomfortable and I dunno why because you're meant to feel safe in them kind of places, but I just don't at all'.

While some workers said that their employers made sure they got home safely, the more usual finding was that 'getting home' was the responsibility – personal and financial – of the worker.

Second, there were concerns that altercations during work, might lead to being followed home. A female Security Guard described her experience:

'There were a couple of occasions when I left work um and I was in fact followed like by some of the people I've dealt with in the night, but which to me was quite surprising cause I don't look vulnerable and I'm in uniform and I work as a door supervisor...'

To mitigate the risk of follow up threats, female workers described elaborate ways to protect themselves. This included not ordering food from certain food courier providers, as they did not want their home address to be known to fellow workers that they regarded as dangerous. A Security Guard also described changing her hairstyles and appearance when going about day-to-day activities such as shopping so that she would not be recognised and risk reappraisals from members of the public that she might have barred or refused a drink during her night-time shifts.

'There are some nasty people, and there's an element that I might bump into them, I am vulnerable. When you do this job, you do change the way that you do things when you are not at work....I wear my hair up for work and down when I am with my son.....I was walking round ASDA with my son and someone I had ejected from a bar, was looking at me and saying ' I know you from somewhere.'

This respondent went on to suggest that working as a Security Guard meant that she did not want to go out at night for her own entertainment.

'I live it in a place where I'm very conscious of who knows where I live and all of that sort of stuff just because I work and live in the same city and I don't go out much ….when you do this job, you do change the way that you do things when you're not at work.'

Female staff reported the significant impact this had on their mental wellbeing. Indeed, the observation of violence was described as both desensitising as well as traumatic. Here, a Security Guard described how her friends responded when she detailed what has happened during her night shift.

'I talked to my friends a little while ago about a knife incident or something and they say, do you not realise how blasé you're talking about that? And I went, well yeah but why and they went…. that's not normal… to go to work and see stuff like that? And I think it's only when like, it's only at that point, that I really sat down and thought the stuff that we deal with sometimes. It's a small percentage of the population at work that experience those things. And I think we take for granted how much we probably take on...'

Another female colleague, continued.

'Yeah, and I think that you forget sometimes how it's not normal to see what you see at work. Like I saw a girl one night, opened up all of their veins and everything and you're just thinking, you like you have to go home and like, yeah, that's, if anyone ever says to me, what's the worst thing you've seen I don't think about any fights or anything. I think about that girl every single time. I don't know why she did it to herself.'

Summary

The complex nature of the NTE, largely due to the unique environmental conditions in which permissive, abusive and sexualised norms prevail, fosters the normalisation of violence, sexual violence and gendered-based harassment towards women but includes men. This normalisation of abuse, violence and sexual harassment towards NTE workers was particularly evident in the responses from bar staff, club staff, door staff and Security Guards who are often in roles where they are perceived as the 'gatekeepers' of fun'. However, such experiences also extended to uniformed Police Officers. The 'it's all part of the job' culture served to conceal the magnitude and multi-faceted nature of sexual violence within the NTE and resulted in a reluctance to report.

Publicity campaigns to increase the awareness of the ubiquity of unwanted sexual behaviour and the importance of reporting may help shift prevailing social norms and the toleration of violence.

NTE workers would feel safer if their place of work took responsibility for getting them home and if they could secure cheap or free parking close to where they work to enable them to get home securely.

4.4

Policing the Night-Time Economy.

Policing the Night-time Economy

Keeping the NTE venues and streets safe is a responsibility shared by statutory and non-statutory agencies – a nuanced combination of formal and informal policing practices. This research garnered insights into the relationships that exist between Police Officers and NTE workers, especially private Security Guards. It revealed both the good practice and tensions/ambiguities that emerge when jurisdiction of public spaces is shared. The study established the central but underrated, and often misunderstood, role that security services offer. Overall, the research provided a deep understanding of the role and remit of policing.

The Security Guards

The term the thin blue line refers to the idea that Police Officers prevent society from descending into chaos. In line with previous literature, this study revealed the central role that private Security Guards play in maintaining order at night. They were described as an essential service, a buffer between the public and NTE workers, who could de-escalate situations, or 'move-on' customers who were causing or likely to cause trouble. In other words, there was evidence of a thin black line.

NTE workers within pubs and clubs and fast food outlets were very clear that their sense of security was enhanced when private Security Guards were employed and certainly that they felt less safe on nights when a private security presence was deemed unnecessary.

While private security companies ostensibly provide guards for venues and their jurisdiction covers the doors and internal premises, the study suggests that the role of the private Security Guard extends way beyond the spatial confines of the club, bar, or restaurant into the public space of the High Street. They would be called to street bawls and radioed to support instances where altercations beyond the venue were occurring. This forces two important observations. First, the central role that the Security Guards play as the first responder and provider of essential services, but second, a question about who is responsible for the policing of the street.

Indeed, the Security Guards themselves recognised this tension – feeling an obligation to intervene in street incidents, but recognising that they were operating beyond their official role:

'I've always had the attitude and I've always said …that if there's something within the vicinity of where you are and you can help go and deal with it… do what you 'gotta' do… if something's happening and you can put a stop to it safely, then then do that… We've often been criticised for that because they're saying well it's not in your remit you shouldn't be on that but I think this is the wider problem is people are committing crimes... doing these things because -no-one challenges them.'

There were numerous examples given about the importance of the presence of Security Guards, and the reassurance they provided. A Street Pastor described how important Security Guards were, often extending their support beyond the spatial confines of the venue where they had been employed:

'There was once about 5/6 separate fights… Broke out all at once. outside McDonald's. It was actually all around us…. the bouncers, they just called in all the others, all legged it all up. So, within seconds, there was bouncers everywhere. So, you know there's always some help not far away, if we've got stuck. Yeah. And then the Police as well, sometimes they're very quick to get there as well.'

Our research also revealed that the private security companies were being proactive, providing information and support that extended beyond the provision of door and venue security. For example, one company had set up its own safety hubs and had produced posters to distribute to students on how to keep themselves safe at night. Many of our focus groups with NTE workers suggested that they would seek out a Security Guard or go to one of their safe spots rather than the 'official' safe havens.

As important as this offer is, it is unclear how well known these additional places of safety are. There is latitude to enhance knowledge and use of this resource, as well as support this offer through official endorsement, if deemed appropriate.

Overall, the private Security Guards were acting as the eyes and ears of the street. In this role they often put themselves at risk of violence and abuse (as detailed in the section on experiences) and have little formal support to help them manage the vicarious trauma of what they have witnessed. As one member of the group explained:

'I do not think we account properly for the trauma…not like the Police… what security and door staff actually deal with has a huge impact.'

This view was corroborated by an interjection from another member of the group:

'I think the big thing that I've seen is… we deal with a lot of quite traumatic situations… and … as a company we try, but I think at the same time there's very little help that's offered to people with what they are potentially living with … I've seen the guy he's been glassed in the face, literally in the eye, and blood spurting out and there's things that stick with you… I don't think the mental health aspect… the trauma … I don't think that's ever accounted for properly … we're not the Police force, but I don't think they look at that and see what security and door staff actually deal with and the impact it actually plays on them.'

The risks, but also, the precarity of the Security Guard role was described. Informal policing, by its very nature, lacks the authority and support that Police Officers might expect to yield and there was much discussion about the lack of training, physical injury, fear of intervention in the context of filming and counter allegations, and lack of support from formal policing agencies.

Specifically, Security Guards felt that they lacked the protection afforded to Police Officers, and yet were having to deal with serious situations while waiting for Police assistance:

'We don't have the assistance that the Police have, you know, we don't have a a magic button which calls, you know, as many Police in the area…We don't have a spray, batons, handcuffs.'

The Security Guards were proud of their role and very keen to distance themselves from the dated stereotypes of burly, aggressive bouncers. Respondents reported that this legacy view did not chime with their own experience of the profession. Many private Security Guards are now women which, as we have noted in the section on experience, was deemed to be an important mix, and there was unanimous wish to be afforded greater status and recognition.

'It used to be, who's the biggest, badest guy in the bar and he can have a door licence..... you know, you had that like Ray Winston type of thing at the door....but now we are well tuned to customer service, and we know how to talk to people...we have to use our communications skills, you cannot just get stuck in...our job has many different facets to it.'

Instead, they saw themselves as not only professionals but critical to street safety, a positioning not currently reinforced in popular cultural discourse.

The Street Pastors

There was a widespread recognition that the Street Pastors also occupied a central role in maintaining order and providing reassurance, a role especially valued by the private Security Guards:

R1: *'And the Street Pastors are pretty good, they're amazing'*

R2: *'With their flip flops and their bottles'*

Collective Laughter

R3: *'Yeah, they're all amazing…'*

The critical and generous role that the Street Pastors play was also recognised by taxi drivers and bar staff as highlighted in this exchange:

TD2: *'They [Street Pastors] just basically ring me when they come across people that are not well, in bad situations where they haven't got any money and things like that, and Street Pastors out of their own pocket will pay their cab fare. But you know, the Street Pastors really are trying to get people home safe. You know, I can't praise them guys enough for what they do, whether it's just giving girls slippers to wear at the end of the night because their feet hurt or whether it's giving them water or just sitting with them when they're on their own.'*

The Street Pastors saw themselves as a patrol service, on the lookout for troubled people, standing as an extra resource to fill the gaps in policing:

SP: *'Yeah, they have patrols out on the beat, but... sometimes they're not always available on the streets or to come out, so you know we are there- just as that extra person to call on...'*

Street Pastors frequently served as a vital connection between essential services and nightclubs, particularly in evaluating emergency situations. Their roles ranged from providing first aid to offering transportation home, making critical decisions regarding the need for emergency services. As highlighted in the quote below, the Street Pastors described how they maintained positive relationships with nightclubs.

'Yeah, we have that relationship between the clubs and us. You know it's; it's been… The case where door staff will call us if they've got a drunk female outside the club or male saying they need help, rather than calling the police or ambulance, they will call us first. If you go and assess the situation and see what they're doing, they're- maybe just need help getting home…. Or any reason, really. But you know, because we're out on the streets, we're there. So can pick up most people.'

Street Pastors did not view themselves as extensions of the police, but instead emphasised their independence. Their identity was rooted in their role as active listeners who helped without enforcing law and order.

'Yeah, which I think is…., different to what- different atmosphere than we bring, to what the police do, 'cause… Yeah, police more, kind of, authoritarian then, you know, having- quite be aggressive whereas you know, although we have uniform, we're not- we're not part of the police, you know, more kind of independent. So, it's more of a softer approach to people, you know. Although yeah, we do have connections with the police as well. If it did- things did escalate, then we can call the police you know.'

The Police

The Police play a critical role in the management and regulation of the night-time economy. It is imperative to consider the role of policing within the NTE, strategies employed by the Police, their relationships with partner agencies in preventing VAWG (and crime more widely), and the ways that they identify potential risk areas, and hold perpetrators to account as well as the challenges they face in asserting order and governance.

Across all focus groups Police Officers emphasised that tackling VAWG was a strategic priority in their force, and they regularly encountered internal communications that placed this critical agenda at the forefront of their mind.

However, in all focus groups, the Police Officers frequently emphasised that their night-time work was compromised by understaffing:

Police FG2: *'Sometimes it's down to staffing... the night staff are so understaffed that they end up using late staff to go out to calls…They have no one, so there's no one on the street... sometimes it's down to staffing two weekends in a row they had no one ..no night time economy officers walking about because they're out dealing with one three sixes.'*

Consequently, they often found themselves responding to incidents alone as single-crewed officers, even at the expense of their own safety. As this sergeant explained:

Police FG1: *'There have been occasions where they've (officers) been single crewed… if we attend something single crewed, we are in for a tougher time... there's no doubt about it because they will identify you on your own and actually they can have a bit of fun…And if it gets sticky, you can ask for some back up, with regret at the moment that backup would be a long time coming….And I agree… I think it is dangerous to be sending officers on their own.'*

Several officers explained how understaffing left them feeling anxious and this potentially impacted on the way that they policed the streets during the early hours:

Police FG3 (male officer): *'You're intimately aware that if you're by yourself then you are more at risk.'*

This was echoed by other officers, as highlighted by this female officer:

Police FG4: *'I've been single-crewed a couple of time. I just don't like it. I don't mind going out by myself, that's not an issue. Sometimes it's quite nice to be by yourself. But when it gets dark and you're driving around, I don't know what it is, I can't really explain it, I just feel quite uneasy a bit on edge. I can't explain why…'*

Police Officers described that their visible presence at night is generally welcomed by the public and NTE workers. They also acknowledged that their presence could sometimes be a catalyst for what they perceived as unruly behaviour. They described some individuals as deliberately acting aggressively or attempting to display dominance in front of the officers and their friends.

There was agreement from all officers that the consumption of alcohol (and drugs) in the NTE contributed to an increase in violent and aggressive behaviours towards them and female members of the public by perpetrators.

Police FG2: *'People play up when Police are around, especially when alcohol is involved. Sometimes we can be catalyst to their behaviour…so the trouble about night-time economy is about being out there, being friendly, engaging but with certain demographics that can be worse because they will escalate their behaviour and try to show off and try to instigate problems when there's absolutely nothing that needs to happen, whereas normally they won't, so it can work both ways.'*

Furthermore, some male Police Officers noted an increase in the nature and form of verbal abuse that they were receiving from members of the public following the aftermath of several high-profile sexual violence, domestic abuse and murder cases involving serving Police Officers within UK Police forces.

The officers outlined how systemic failures such as sexual misconduct, poor reporting channels, mistreatment of victims and survivors of sexual violence, and inadequate and sometimes inappropriate communications with the general public (both nationally and

locally) has a direct impact on the ability and confidence of individual officers to do their job. Patrol Officers are often at the forefront of the abuse. Officers described been shouted at and receiving a barrage of verbal abuse from members of the public.

Police FG2: *'Yes …. every Police Officer is now a rapist and a murderer.'*

Another elaborated:

Police FG2: *'I walk down Canterbury high street and get called out all the time… There was a recent poster [referring to poster displayed at Maidstone Police station listing rape and sexual assault as a non-emergency] and I did a night-time economy shift that night and honestly, the amount of comments that I was getting during the night as such 'oh rapes not a priority' and that sort of stuff, it is, I know it is…that then obviously affects everyone's view of us and you then get called things in the streets and yeah, it's degrading because people don't wanna go to tell you things because they think you're a rapist and a murderer…but the one, that one person [referring to Police perpetrators], the screw ups and they screw up big. Unfortunately, everyone is tarred with the same brush…it takes one officer…and the whole structure is damaged.'*

In another focus group (Police FG4), officers reflected on the extent of female mistrust in policing following a recent encounter with two female members of the public in the early hours of the morning:

R2: *'There were two female students walking by themselves, on the outskirts of town. So, we stopped them in a marked van as well, there were three blokes and two female officers and was like 'where are you trying to get to?' they told us, and we told them that they were going the wrong way. We said we'll give you a lift, we can drop you off, save you a 45-minute walk in the dark because it just you two and you don't know where you are, and they were like 'No we don't trust you; we will walk.'*

R3: *'Wow, that's really shocking. What time of night was that?'*

R2: *'one, two-ish,'*

R3: *It's not like that's 10ish…it's shocking, if that was me, I would have accepted the lift… you don't know who is about at that time with clubs kicking people out. it's just a shame, isn't it.'*

R1: *'It's sad. I think the fact they don't want to do that because of actions of Police Officers who are no longer in the job. It's sad really. Because. Yeah, it's like what if something happens to them too? It's like, well, actually, that could have been prevented. But it's because of the lack of confidence that you've got in Police Officers.'*

As a result, many of the officers stated that the way they police has changed, and they are more cautious about how they address certain incidences. Whilst this may seem initially positive, this raises concerns about the confidence of Police Officers in addressing and tackling VAWG and other alcohol related harms within public spaces.

Polices Officers noted that whilst there had been significant improvements to how they gather and analyse data to enable them to proactively police the NTE, sexual offences and crime more widely, there had been challenges when they were caught off guard with

new emerging trends. For instance, at the start of the 2021/22 academic year there was a surge in the number of reported offences related to spiking nationally. Police national data collected by the National Police Chiefs Council recorded a total of 5,000 incidences of spiking between September 2021 and September 2022, and between September 2021 and December 2022 recorded 1,032 cases related to needle spiking (Home Affairs Committee, 2022). The true scale of the problem and how it compared to previous years was not well understood nationally and locally as highlighted by a senior officer:

Police FG4: *'Would say it's a priority and we'll deal with the victims and would look after them and would investigate the crime, but the data has not been recorded, If you're not responding to it in a consistent way, and if you're not looking at it in a consistent way, you're not getting the data… You can't see if you're improving. You don't know if there's an issue. Because there's no tangible data for it.*

It is evident, however, that through Operation Lookout the police have started to gain a deeper insight into the scale of the problem and are working to proactively tackle incidences of spiking and enhance routes to report.

The formal and informal interface

Considering that the maintenance of order is a shared task, we were interested to explore how Security Guards and the Police worked together, and how they viewed their respective contributions.

The focus groups suggested some tensions and misunderstandings. For instance, the Security Guards respected the police but reported some negative interactions and sometimes felt rather unsupported. Indeed, members of the focus group suggested that they felt that they did not garner respect from the Police, and sometimes felt criticised.

'You know what we have to do…. and I think they, the Police, when they do turn up [they are] quite quick to criticise. Why are we dealt with in that way? I think this is the problem that I've sort of always had an issue with for a while…. we're often held to account far beyond…what we should be…. If the government agencies expect us to perform that way, then they should also support us.'

Moreover, they felt they often had to account for their actions:

'Now quite often, they [the Police] get here and ask why someone is restrained, and you've got to explain the process of why you've ended up in this situation as opposed to 'thanks for doing our job for us and we will get rid of them for you.'

It was also felt that there were sometimes unacceptable delays in the time it took the Police to respond to requests for back up, a contention shared by other NTE workers. In other words, whilst there was a respect for the Police, their NTE presence was deemed to be insufficient.

Further, the Security Guards observed that calling the Police often resulted in no action and so was not always worth pursuing.

SG1: *'It seems like there is a lot of reluctance to get things sorted and I think this puts us in positions where we think – what is the point – nothing is going to come of it.'*

SG2: *'You basically lose faith.'*

SG3: *'I would never bother reporting any abuse to the Police, if I were abused at work, there is no point … I might get a call at 8am in the morning when I have finished work at 3.00 - they have no sense of time...'*

The private Security Guards also relayed examples of where they found the Police to be dismissive of their own allegations of crime and violence.

'It's almost like you're expected to take that kind of abuse …. it's something that we all experience, and we all see it but and don't get me wrong, we're not trying to disregard the Police, but it's like...it's the general attitude… I believe they have towards security and door and especially door supervisors that we are expected to take a certain amount of abuse whether that be racial, sexual, whatever it is, we're supposed to tolerate that...'

Put differently, they thought that the Police saw risk and abuse as part of the job of the Security Guard, an unavoidable aspect of the role and not worthy of pursuit through the criminal justice routes. This evidence corroborates observations made about the normalisation of sexual violence within NTE work, showing that enduring physical and verbal violence is regarded a part of the role description:

'Once at a venue, there was a fight and it was group, basically, that were causing an issue in the bar... they were taken out... males, females..., punches, scratches, everything else. One of the doormen had his genitals grabbed by a female, like, literally pulled and then kicked. Em, so anyway, we turn up separate them they're on the other side, they're staying there shouting abuse at us. Police have been called; Police turned up. They're still standing there. They're still throwing everything under the sun and Police said nothing to them anyway. They said, well, what's the problem? I said my colleagues been assaulted. He's, you know, he's basically had his been kicked in the genitals, he's also had them pulled and the response from the female Police Officer at the time really surprised me, and never forget it... she said 'you probably enjoyed it'... uhm… I kinda looked, I literally looked at the at the guy who happened to, and I was just like, I just shook my head I was like, so not only are you taking that attitude, but you are also letting him stand there, not even saying anything to him. So, I think there's, don't get me wrong, it's not just us that get this, the Police do too, but I think the Police attitude is that this is what we take.'

In considerable contrast, when probed about their relationship with the NTE workers and venues in Canterbury, the Police Officers emphasised their generally positive relationship with door staff, noting that while they shared a common goal, each had distinct roles to fulfil. This said, it was recognised that there were challenges to overcome, not least navigating when responsibility needed to be negotiated or when the Police needed to come and remedy situations where things had begun to 'go wrong'.

'I think we've all got our jobs to do and I think that the door staff here in Canterbury we've forged those close relationships over the last 12-18 months, partly the result of safer streets and partly because of the Best Bar None scheme, the bid (Canterbury Bid) and the partnership working we've got here in the city…As a result, our working relationship with the door staff and with night clubs is very, very good…I know I have had conversations with local businesses, local night-time venues where we've agreed that it would be good to work better together…It's how that looks ..Police aren't trained to train. …And door

staff have got a job to do and it's independent of the Police much of the time until it goes mildly wrong…so I'm going to say probably in an ideal world, yes better relationship, but, in reality, challenging.'

A female Police Officer, having worked previously as a member of door staff, distinguished the different responsibilities of Police Officers from those of door staff. She emphasised that the duty of door staff is to the licensed venue in which they are operating. She also emphasised the generally positive rapport between the Police and private security personnel in Canterbury and the importance of this relationship in keeping the public safe.

Police FG1: *'I used to work on the door work at the age of 18 down in Scotland and down here in Kent and working on the door is a different job from being a Police Officer...you are there to help the nightclub, or club, pub adhere to their licencing conditions… make sure nobody in there is too drunk. If issues start, if fights breakout separate that fight.'*

Despite some universality of experience across statutory and non-statutory professionals in terms of being recipients of abuse, there were significant differences in the physical and wellbeing support available across the sectors. Police routinely had body cams and personal protective equipment, as well as defensive, non-lethal tactical weapons. In contrast, as noted above, the personal protective equipment of the private Security Guards was minimal.

Summary

Maintaining order within the NTE is a responsibility that is shared between the Police, Security Guards and volunteers. While Security Guards ostensibly police the private space of pubs and clubs, this research has established that their remit extends into the public space of the street, and they are often the first to respond when violence erupts. The Security Guards are proud of their role and consider themselves to be professionals. They would like to be considered as such, to be respected and supported in the work that they do.

The Police consider themselves to be understaffed and stretched, without capacity to patrol the streets as a preventative strategy. Instead, they find they are 'called out' in cases of emergency. This is in part a feature of the growth of the NTE and the extension of the times of the day that Police intervention is required. As such, the Police find themselves problem solving – response policing – rather than having the time to be a reassuring presence on the High Street. This role has tended to be filled by Security Guards and Street Pastors who seek out and support vulnerable customers, shepherding them to places of safety, or to taxis. Police managers might consider a rebalancing of operational resources to enable more participatory and anticipatory policing, especially when there is a temporal and spatial concentration of night-time activity – so-called, hot-spot policing. This approach is supported by the literature that shows that the visibility of both Police Officers and door staff has a stronger impact on NTE customer perceptions of safety than well positioned CCTV (Brands et al., 2015).

There is then a complex division of labour at play within the NTE that requires co-operation and co-ordination, mutual respect and mutual support. The Police could arguably do more to foster stronger working relationships with door staff. One option would be to establish door staff liaison officers, not a new idea (Lister, 2009), and for policing support to be targeted in areas where late opening licenced premises are located.

4.5

Premise design and safety.

Premise design and safety

Perpetrator behaviour and the severity and number of incidences of spiking, sexual harassment, sexual violence and violence more widely, is influenced by the NTE environment. Specifically, hygiene standards, noise, venue size, ventilation, lighting, staffing levels, and seating capacity, as well as crowd size and cheap drink promotions can serve to reduce or increase harm. It was imperative for this study to consider the design and layout of NTE venues and the visibility of information that signpost women to help, should they need it.

There was evidence that all managers of clubs, bars and fast food restaurants considered the safety of their customers and staff as part of the layout and day-to-day operations. However, there was also evidence of blind spots and potential crowding as well as a distinct lack of clear and accessible information about VAWG support and help.

Access and surveillance

The use of surveillance technologies has become commonplace within the NTE. In this study, all NTE venues and workers utilised a range of technologies for four main reasons; 1) as a tool for the deterrent of crime; 2) to monitor patrons and behavioural patterns; 3) as a database that enabled easy identification and detection of individuals that may have been involved in an incident and 4) as a means of safeguarding NTE workers. Some technologies were multi-purpose, for instance, the use of CCTV to deter, monitor and identify.

For many night clubs and bars that operate within the NTE, identity (ID) scanners have become a pre-condition for entry to venues. This was true of all night clubs and university associated NTE venues within this study. University associated NTE venues utilised rigorous protocols and ID scanners to restrict access and verify that the patron was a bone fide student, as detailed by a member of bar staff:

Bar FG2: *'They have to give their student ID and so make sure it's always students coming in... they check that as well as their ID to make sure that it is the same person.'*

Where students were permitted to bring guests, this was usually limited to one guest per student, and they were required to sign in and provide their ID. NTE workers observed that this helped to provide reassurance for staff and fellow students, as well as minimise the likelihood of the perpetration of spiking and sexual violence within the premises.

Similarly, entry into some night clubs was managed with sophisticated ID scanners linked to a database that would verify the authenticity of the ID and the person presenting it. In addition, the scanners were linked to a database to help to identify potentially problematic individuals and enabled door staff to make decisions on whether to grant entry. Furthermore, the use of ID scanners meant that should an incident arise, the data could be shared with the police.

All NTE venues reported the use of CCTV and radios as part of their daily operations. Body worn cameras were used by the Police and Security Guards. Street Pastors relied on the city centre CCTV operatives to monitor their safety. Taxi drivers reported the use of dashboard cameras. NTE workers described the universal use of CCTV and radios as essential to the

safety of customers and staff as it enabled better identification of incidences of spiking and VAWG:

Club FG1: *'Staff are trained to pass it on to security, they have a CCTV operator. So, if someone thinks they've been spiked or thinks their friend has been spiked, it goes from a member of staff and then goes to the CCTV operator, that person is then taken straight to a first aid room.'*

Furthermore, the combined use of CCTV and radios aided better communications between NTE workers, security guards and CCTV operatives within and external to the venue. This was deemed as a useful for early intervention:

Club FG2: *'So the person that is kind of like overseeing CCTV can communicate between bar and door staff, so immediately after I tell them, they will communicate with door staff and they'll come up to the bar and they'll ask me, who is it? And I'll say it is this person right here and then they'll pull them to a quieter area to ask them questions and kind of figure out what is going on.'*

The value of CCTV obtained from NTE venues as part of the investigative process in addressing VAWG was outlined in all police focus groups as this example illustrates:

Police FG4: *'So you could have member of the public say I think I've been spiked. The cup gets seized and swabbed, samples are taken from potential victim and suspects are identified on CCTV'.*

Overall, surveillance mechanisms were widely used and offered much reassurance.

Layout and design

Venues such as night clubs and fast food restaurants were open plan, providing opportunities for staff and security guards to effectively monitor customers to prevent incidents and intervene where necessary. Nevertheless, in some cases, the sight of the NTE workers was restricted. This was especially the case when bars were level with the ground. Raising the bar height would improve the ability of staff to engage in surveillance, as well as afford them greater protection.

Despite the open plan design of the venues, there were several blind spots in many venues, enabling spaces where perpetration of crime would be invisible.

Female fast food workers also raised concerns regarding changes in the external landscape in which they were situated, that placed them and customers in a vulnerable position as it enabled potential perpetrators to loiter:

FF FG2: *'The benches [outside] they need to go… People can loiter now. So, if we kick them out instead of them just being chucked out into an empty street… now suddenly, there are benches, and they can sit and watch us and then they've got somewhere they can throw their rubbish and they try to intimidate you through the windows.'*

This was a particular concern for them as during busy times the area outside would result in the clustering of individuals exiting bars and nightclubs creating a flashpoint in which perpetrators could engage with potential victims.

First aid rooms (or back rooms) were a feature of several of the NTE venues included in this study. The room(s) provided a private space for NTE workers to engage with and safeguard highly intoxicated and vulnerable patrons. Bar and club staff reported that they would regularly use this space for female customers that they were concerned about, give them food and seek to get them home safely:

Club FG1: *'In the first aid room we basically make sure that the person is safe enough to make their way, if they are not physically capable, we'll call a cab or someone that is related to them, someone that can pick them up, so we ensure that they are going to be safe.'*

Signposting resources

Whist in most focus groups staff were aware of campaigns such as 'Ask Angela' and suggested that posters and campaign material were readily abundant within the venue (e.g., on bathroom doors), this was not the case. In all venues there was a distinct lack of signposting information that guided women on where to seek help should they need it. In one venue, there was no visible information available. Overall, signposting information in all venues was very limited.

Web pages and social media

To assess the extent to which each venue, organisation and/or profession foreground questions of safety online, the research team examined all webpages and public social media that were linked to the focus groups. Each site was examined to assess whether information was provided about 'Ask Angela', Safe Havens, how to avoid spiking, how to drink responsibly, and what was expected of customers (e.g., Zero Tolerance). Additionally, it was noted whether drink promotions were evident. Good practice was evident on both Security Guard and Police sites. However, it was clear that there was room to enhance online advice in all other areas.

Table 2: summarises the findings from websites

Group	'Ask Angela'	Safe Havens	Spiking	Safe Drinking	Cultural expectations	Drink promotions	Comments
Club FG1	x	x	x	x	x	√	
Club FG2	x	x	x	x	x	x	Reference to 'guzzling down cocktails'
Club FG3	x	x	x	x	x	x	One out of nine current events promotes alcohol
Bar FG1	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Bar FG2	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mentions safety and security at night but no explicit detail
FF	x	x	x	x	x	x	Some mention of zero tolerance in response to public allegations of harassment of staff
Police	√	√	√	X	√	x	
SP	x	x	√	x	x	x	
SG	√	√	√	√	√	x	
TD	x	x	x	x	x	x	

X = no information

√ = information present (e.g. guidance/support information or information relating to drinks promotion)

Summary

While there was evidence to suggest that venues took great care over entry to their premises, many opportunities to improve the safety of women and girls remain. Venues could reduce blind spots and increase physical and online information about where and how to seek help.

5. Summary and Recommendations.

Research with a wide range of workers of the NTE garnered important insights. There have been considerable proactive efforts made to enhance the safety of Canterbury's streets at night, and to protect women and girls from violence in public spaces. There is evidence to suggest that violence is reducing and many of the initiatives such as zero tolerance training and street pastors are valued and impactful. Robust and consistent practices to combat and respond to allegations of spiking are in place. This rigour is the outcome of training and Police support.

However, the NTE is an environment where residing and new challenges must be navigated. Violence is associated with alcohol intake and a shifting set of drinking practices, especially the phenomenon of pre-drinking amongst a generation that missed significant opportunities to learn how to conduct themselves within the night-time leisure industry during the pandemic, exert new pressures on NTE workers. Workers find themselves having to protect their customers but also shield themselves when verbal abuse, violent and sexualised harassment, retribution, and challenges to their authority are all commonplace. In support of previous literature, NTE workers are subjected to sexualised abuse, and for women this was deeply unsettling and impacted on their behaviour, mental health and feelings of safety when outside of work.

NTE workers are central for the protection of customers. They engage in many practices to reduce spiking, manage intoxication and prevent VAWG. However, engagement with such practices results from personal knowledge and confidence and is not scaffolded by training. This means there is variance and inconsistency in approach. In turn, there was evidence that knowledge and understanding about VAWG was broad but inconsistent. All NTE workers would welcome more training, especially if face to face educational delivery could be prioritised.

The research revealed contradictory evidence about the effectiveness of the Ask Angela campaign and the Safe Havens. Certainly, there was a need for clearer advertisement of these resources and arguably more visible muster points could be considered. Venues could also provide more online guidance for customers.

Maintaining order in the NTE is a responsibility shared between Security Guards, Street Pastors and the Police. All three groups are critical to customer safety and hold a wealth of intelligence about night-time risks. However, there was evidence that collaboration between the agencies could be further enhanced.

The findings support the following recommendations.

1. The development of a Canterbury Night-time Economy strategy focused on a multi-agency approach

The district should develop a multi-agency strategy focused on managing night-time risk and minimising VAWG. Articulating an evidence-based approach to the reduction of VAWG, with associated performance indicators, would set a baseline and direction for future activities. The development of a Canterbury NTE strategy must be the outcome of consultation with all key stakeholders.

2. Strengthened relations between formal and informal partners within the NTE

This research has highlighted that the task of increasing the safety of women and girls within the NTE cannot sit with the Police alone. The understaffing of Police Officers means that they are heavily reliant on partner agencies such as Security Guards, Street Pastors, taxi drivers and bar and club staff to enhance the safety of women. It is important for the Police to build collaborative and co-operative relations between all stakeholders.

In particular, the Police should consider the value of introducing door-liaison officers. Such a role would help to cultivate an environment that ensures governance and accountability within the NTE, as well valuing the work of Security Guards. Furthermore, it will promote intelligence about crime hotspots in relation to VAWG, changes in drinking habits, and strategies employed by perpetrators. Such intelligence will enable the Police, licensed venues and NTE workers to take a proactive and evidence-based approach to enhancing safety, and to better understand the value of safety initiatives and their outcomes.

3. Enhanced and Tailored Training

Considering that most NTE workers' understanding of VAWG and their decision to intervene is rooted in personal experience and confidence, the provision of formal training that recognises the unique demands of NTE working is essential. This should include focused training on all elements of VAWG (beyond domestic abuse); safeguarding of vulnerable customers; perpetrator interventions; and active bystander strategies.

Training modules should be delivered regularly to enable all staff to benefit, and it would be advisable to factor in audits and the requirement for refresher courses. NTE workers prefer to engage in face-to-face training and scenario-based delivery. There should not be an expectation that workers pay for this training themselves. The focus groups vividly highlighted the value that NTE workers gave to having the space to learn from colleagues. We recommend that training should be delivered within a multi-agency context rather than siloed to build the NTE sense of community.

4. Review the efficacy of safe havens.

The value of the current safe havens was questioned. The strategic review should consider how safe havens can be better signposted and resourced. A more visible muster point, such as a safety van, parked near to the main hot spot in the city would be worth considering. This type of safety measure can also act as a deterrent.

5. Advertising and Publicity

It is important to ensure that customers know where support is available. There is also merit in being very clear about expectations of customers during night-time leisure. Posters and signage are inconsistent and all venues (not simply those who have engaged with Zero Tolerance training and the Best Bar None scheme) should be encouraged to display clear instructions and advice. Moreover, venues should be supported in the production of on-line materials. Considering that sexualised and gendered abuse is ubiquitous, publicity campaigns that explain how demeaning and unacceptable this behaviour is, would be advisable.

6. Support for NTE workers

Beyond training there are other ways in which NTE workers could be proactively supported. Specifically, the council could explore whether parking could be free at night for NTE workers so that they can get home safely. Many NTE workers described how vicarious trauma was an occupational hazard. Venues should consider building in debriefing opportunities at the conclusion of shifts to help alleviate potential trauma.

7. Improvements to the design and layout of premises

Venues should review whether all spaces are visible to staff and CCTV to minimise blind spots. Raised bars would foster greater opportunities for surveillance of the venue as well offering protection to workers.

8. The development of a VAWG toolkit for workers

Beyond training, NTE workers would benefit from a single repository of information on how to build security and address intoxication, spiking and VAWG. A toolkit containing best practice, guidance and tips, signposting to additional support, etc., would be a valuable and accessible resource.

Appendix

Focus Group/ Interview Questions

The focus group meetings and interviews were intended to enable participants to express their views on VAWG as it pertained to their workplace/occupation in the Night-Time Economy. The following questions were used by the researchers to facilitate discussions.

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your job?
2. Our research is about VAWG. Can you tell us what this means to you?
3. During your time at work have you had any training about how to minimise and/ or deal with sexual violence and harassment (VAWG). If yes, what sort of training have you had? How useful was this training?
4. What further support and training would you welcome?
5. Do you feel safe at work? What sort of risks do you encounter (at work, getting to and from work)?
6. Have you experienced sexual harassment or unwanted sexual contact whilst at work? How many times?
7. If you have experienced violence yourself, what did you do?
8. Do you feel supported by your employer?
9. Would anything make you feel safer at work?
10. Does your place of work use the Ask Angela scheme, or do you have any other mechanisms to support your customers and protect them against sexual advances or spiking? If yes, how often do you find customers use these mechanisms? Do you think these strategies are adequate?
11. Do you ever witness sexual violence and harassment against other people whilst at work? If yes, probe frequency and type and also explore the context of such violence and the usual victims and perpetrators.
12. If yes, when you witness such violence, what do you do?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us about violence at work?

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