



NIGHT LIGHT

Impact Report 2024



Prepared by

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This report contains details of sexual and physical violence that some may find distressing. Please read with care.

*The service refers to female street sex workers as to date this is the demographic of sex workers Night Light has partnered with. We have chosen to use the term 'sex worker' given the stigma and negative connotations that are associated with the label 'prostitute' (Harding and Hamilton 2008, Cusick et al 2003, Campbell and O'Neill 2006).

The term 'customer' refers to an individual who purchases sexual services, sometimes referred to as a 'punter'.

NIGHT LIGHT



Shining a light on night-time exploitation and harm

Night light is an innovative partnership project co-led by Jo Ritchie, a Child Sexual Exploitation worker based within Barnardo's, and Rose Brown, a Police Sex Work Liaison Officer from Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

In 2020, a large police investigation responded to a network of adult men who were found to be repeatedly trafficking and sexually exploiting a group of children and young people in the areas of Bristol affected by street sex work. Partner agencies worked together to disrupt the men and safeguard the children. We know this area is a 'hotspot', where children are at increased risk of being targeted by dangerous adults for the purposes of exploitation. Aiming to make the area safer for children and young people, we realised there was a need to work in partnership with *street sex workers. This led to the beginnings of Night Light.

The Night Light team patrol the areas of Bristol where street sex work is prevalent from 7pm to the early hours of the morning. The objective is to form trusting relationships with the female street sex workers, who are often our eyes and ears in relation to street-based exploitation of children, recognising that the women can play an integral role in safeguarding some of Bristol's most at risk children and young people.

The team partner with the women in their aim of identifying children at risk of exploitation, providing them with opportunities to share vital safeguarding information. This includes any sightings of children and young people and details of *customers they have interacted with who they believe may pose a risk to under 18s. In addition, the women are encouraged to share safety concerns for themselves and their peers, relating to adult sexual exploitation and physical assaults.

Night Light often takes place alongside Operation Boss. This is a Police Operation that Avon and Somerset Constabulary have been running for approximately 14 years. The operation focuses on engaging with on-street sex workers whilst disrupting kerb crawlers and males exploiting them. This operation was an early adopter of the NPCC Nordic Model approach to Policing sex work; that being a focus on not criminalising Sex Workers but a Safeguarding approach, with a Focus on criminalising the men who exploit this vulnerable cohort.

The Night Light team are passionate in their aim to empower vulnerable street sex workers to see their value in reducing harm and safeguarding some of our most at risk children, tackling head on violence against women and children. They are ambitious in their desire to put a stop to this form of exploitation against children, and ultimately preventing them from becoming sexually exploited as adults, like the sex workers themselves.

Core Values



01.

We prioritise the safety of both women and children

through our work we proactively safeguard women and children, ensuring that our interactions do not place them at further harm.

02.

We work with the women as
equal partners

we recognise and amplify the importance of their lived experience and insight. We look to them as experts in tackling the exploitation of children and violence against women.

03.

We believe that everyone
deserves to be treated with
respect and dignity

we acknowledge that women involved in street sex work and exploited children are often misunderstood, stereotyped and face stigma both in services and in wider society. Night Light challenge this and models a compassionate and non-judgemental approach.

04.

We are committed to working collaboratively with partner agencies

the success of Night Light is dependent on all agencies proactively playing their unique part and working together to safeguard women and children.

05.

We strive to achieve justice

we acknowledge that justice is rare for crimes committed against exploited children and women involved in street sex work which contributes to a lack of trust in the criminal justice system. Night Light aims to rebuild this through our proactive involvement in disrupting perpetrators of these crimes.

Partnership at the heart

Partnership is at the heart of everything we do within Night Light. The Night Light team has been able to shine because of the commitment and dedication from Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police. Both partners recognise that, if we want to find sustainable solutions, we need innovative, compassionate and dedicated practitioners working in unison.

Whilst Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police bring different skills to this unique approach, Night Light fundamentally would not work without the women at the heart of it. They are our unsung invaluable partners.

And for that, we thank them.

The Night Light Team

Night Light Lead Jo Ritchie

Jo is a qualified Social Worker with over 16 years experience of working in the field of sexual exploitation. Currently in post as a specialist child exploitation worker within Barnardo's.

Harriet Grant

Children's Services
Bristol City Council

Abigail Meredith

Regional Organised
Crime Unit

Night Light Lead Rose Brown

Rose is a Police Officer for Avon and Somerset Police with over 20 years experience. Currently in post as the Sex Work Liaison officer to on and off street sex workers.

DC Clare Davies

Child Exploitation Team
Avon and Somerset
Police

PC Tess Swan

Sex Work Liaison Officer
Avon and Somerset Police

PC Rosie Bellissio

Response Officer
Avon and Somerset
Police



Barnardo's Vision

Barnardo's purpose is about changing childhoods and changing lives. Here at Old Market Services, we feel these are more than just words. Our vision within OMS is to provide high quality intervention to children at risk of exploitation, serious youth violence and those who are reported missing. This is achieved through a relationship based approach, working at a child's pace to assess risk and create safety.

With almost 30 years of experience supporting children and families within Bristol, the service recognises that a 'one size fits all' approach simply doesn't work, and no one service can do it all. The children Night Light encounter are often hidden from the services that are best placed to support them which means assertive outreach is essential. Night Light recognises that, if we are going to reach these children, we need to proactively go into spaces and places at times that most services are no longer operating. This assertive approach enables this hidden cohort to be seen.

Once identified, multi-agency steps are implemented which may include Police Powers of Protection, referrals to social care and specialist exploitation services such as BACE (Barnardo's Against Child Exploitation). This has led to children accessing the relevant services.

Here at OMS, we believe that every child deserves care and attention to help them thrive and exceed their potential.

We recognise that the work of Night Light does not stop on the streets as we advocate for safer, happier, healthier childhoods, believing that exploitation has no place in our city.



Avon and Somerset Police's Vision

The National Police Guidance on Sex Work is underpinned by the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda and includes ***Building trust and Confidence by demonstrating a consistent commitment to addressing exploitation and crimes against sex workers*** and ***Relentlessly pursuing perpetrators***. Avon and Somerset Police Crime Priorities include ***engaging, supporting and working with communities, victims and partner organisations*** and ***increasing the legitimacy of, and public confidence in, the police and criminal justice system***. The focus of the Sex Work Liaison Officer role within Avon and Somerset Police is to work with sex workers, partner agencies and police colleagues to improve reporting and investigation of crimes against those who work in the sex industry.

Night Light, a project recognised through both a local 'Excellence in Policing' Award, and a National Award for work in VAWG, is seeking to meet the above aims by working consistently with this vulnerable cohort of women within an often-hidden community.

"As the co-lead and Sex Work Liaison Officer I am passionate about giving the women a voice, providing them with access to the Police and Criminal Justice system, and disrupting those that offend against them. Night Light builds that trust with this community, has improved and increased reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation and also Adult Sexual Exploitation, and targeted outreach in the place where the sex workers and children affected, are most at risk of exploitation and harm."

PC Rose Brown

**Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police's
visions align to form Night Light.**

A Night Light shift...

Over recent phases of the project, it has become clear that the strength of relationships with the women has grown and thus facilitated communication and disclosure of the risk that children, young people and they themselves face. The following provides an example of a recent Night Light shift.

The team had contact with 17 women, 8 of whom were in a place to talk about Night Light.

- Disclosures in relation to two recent fatalities.
 - Information shared with the major crime investigation team, who were already investigating one incident as murder.
 - The other incident had initially been recorded as a sudden death, but since sharing Night Light intelligence, this is now being further investigated as a suspicious incident.
- Disclosures in relation to incest, child sexual assault and the distribution of indecent images of child sexual abuse.
 - Key information shared with Operation Bluestone (specialist sexual abuse investigators) which has enabled suspect identification for both the male showing the images as well as the male committing the offence against the child in the video.
 - It has resulted in lines of enquiry that should lead to the identification of those involved in incest.
 - Enquiries will be made to attempt to identify the child shown, a potential link has already been made to a child previously known to Night Light. This intelligence will continue to be developed.
- Rape, sexual and physical assault disclosures relating to a perpetrator repeatedly raised by the women over the last 3 months. There were clear consistent messages from the women that they felt he presented a significant and immediate risk to their lives and personal safety.
 - Information shared on this shift relating to a minor traffic offence that this male committed has led to his identification.
 - The individual is a Registered Sex Offender, who is currently wanted for a rape offence against a child which took place in a different area.
 - This shift prompted officers to action an outstanding warrant. He has since been arrested.
 - Officers found evidence of further offences, breaches to his conditions and items such as cable ties and plastic sheeting.

A Night Light shift ... continued

- Women shared information of a known exploiter including his current address and intelligence around offensive weapons.
 - This information will assist in closer monitoring and disruption of the male in question.
- Information regarding a Registered Sex Offender who has previously groomed and sexually assaulted a 15 year old child was disclosed by one of the women.
 - This has been shared with his offender manager so that tighter monitoring can take place.
- Information regarding a 15 year old child being in the company of a customer who attempted to agree business with one of the women.
 - Intelligence has been submitted and the Night Light team will continue to liaise with the women in the hope that we might be able to identify and safeguard this child.
- The team sighted a repeat exploiter of the women, this is a breach of his Community Protection Warning.
 - He will be issued a Community Protection Notice. Breach of this will result in him being required to attend court.
 - This could lead to him being issued with a Community Behavioural Order, banning him from the area as an effective disruption tool.
- Intelligence was shared by the women around customers repeatedly asking for their help to access children to sexually assault.
 - This helps build a picture of current risk and provides information that services would have otherwise not known.
- Intelligence was submitted about all 17 women.
 - This will help us safeguard them further and build a more robust picture of risk.

An interview with 'Lily'

15 year old Lily (not her real name) was spotted with her 16 year old sister by the Night Light team frequently over a 2 week period. They were seen to be spending time in the Stapleton Road area late at night and in the early hours of the morning.

The team spoke to the girls and explained why they were worried about them, helping them to understand some of the risks. Lily shared that they would be quick to accept a seemingly kind man's offer to sit in a car on a wet night, especially if there was the offer of a McDonalds.

Each night, the team would ensure they got home safely – however questions were being asked as to why they kept wandering the streets, even on cold and rainy nights. The risks felt high and there was a need to understand the current situation for these girls better. Both Lily and her sister were referred to BACE to receive specialist CSE intervention.

Having a 1:1 worker gave Lily the space to open up about what was going on at home and explain the levels of abuse and neglect that she was experiencing. This provided some insight around why the streets felt safer than home. These conversations supported the Night Light team to advocate that Lily and her sister needed to move into foster care.

Quickly settled and safe in her new home, Lily stopped wandering the streets at night and her risk of sexual exploitation reduced immediately. She is doing exceptionally well and has shared her thoughts on Night Light and the service she has received.

When were you first approached by Night Light and why?

"A few months ago when I was with my sister because it was late and we were on Stapleton Road. I saw them a few times. We were out because we didn't want to be home as we thought being out at night was safer than being at home."

How did you feel when the team first stopped to talk to you?

"I was worried that my mum would shout at me if the police got in contact with her about seeing me out."

Did you feel like you needed help at the time?

"No because I didn't understand the dangers of the area at the time and it felt safer than being at home."

How have you been helped by the Night Light project since then?

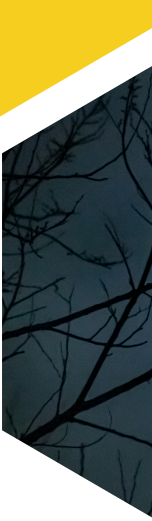
"They've brought awareness to me of the dangers of the area and I don't go out at night anymore because of that."

What difference has it made to your life?

"I don't go out at night anymore and my Barnardo's worker has been an amazing support in moving me away from home so I am now safe."

Why do you think it's important projects like Night Light exist?

"It helps a lot of people to understand the dangers of the outside world and keeps a lot of young children safe."



HELPING THE WOMEN TOO...

During a Night Light Shift, the team engaged with a female street sex worker. She had previously told us to leave her alone, but over time had built some trust in the team and began to talk to us about her experiences of adult sexual exploitation as well as concerns she had for children.

During one particular evening, she waved the team over. She looked distressed and explained that she had just met with a male who proceeded to rape her.

She bravely gave a thorough description of the male as well as details about the location he picked her up from and the car he was driving.

The police were able to identify the male's vehicle from CCTV within minutes and the suspect was also identified. The male was subsequently interviewed and investigated for the offence. The female, who is usually extremely reluctant to talk to the Police, was able to engage with the criminal justice process due to the relationship built through Night Light interactions.



Reach & Impact

2023 Figures



20

In the past 12 months, the women have highlighted around 20 young people at risk of exploitation



100

100% of the children identified through Night Light were not known to be or reported as missing



50

The Night Light Team have engaged with over 50 sex workers



100

100% of the children and women have had some form of safeguarding follow up



6

The number of males identified who pose a risk of sexual harm to children

2024 Figures



20

The women have highlighted around 20 children at risk of exploitation



16

The team have safeguarded 16 children and young people on the streets
Of those 16, only 6 had been reported missing
Night Light therefore highlighted unknown safety concerns for 10 children



124

The team have had 124 conversations with the women about Night Light



100

100% of the children and women have had some form of safeguarding follow up



65

The women have made 65 reports about dangerous men



18

Partner agencies have highlighted 18 children to Night Light seen on the streets at risk of exploitation

The true extent of Night Light often is not captured in relation to the preventive aspect of the service. This year alone the information shared by the women have resulted in several men being questioned or arrested which has very likely resulted in reduced harm and increased safety for multiple potential victims.

THE CURRENT PICTURE

POLICE STATS

NATIONAL POLICE STATS (NPCC)

There were over one million VAWG related crimes recorded during 2022/23, accounting for 20% of all police recorded crime

VAWG related crime increased by 37% between 2018/23

LOCAL AVON & SOMERSET POLICE STATS

From July 18 – June 19 there were 25,304 recorded VAWG related crimes

From July 23 – June 24 there were 36,634 recorded VAWG crimes

Therefore an increase in annual reporting of 11,330

ONE25 STATS

ONE25 STATS (BRISTOL STREET SEX WORKER PROJECT)

165

Women seen street sex working in the last 12 months

98%

Disclosed being victims of sexual violence and/or domestic abuse

78%

Increase in women accessing outreach support at night

BARNARDO'S AND BCC STATS

BARNARDO'S AND BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL STATS

BARNARDO'S STATS FROM
1ST OCT '23 – 30TH SEPT '24

139

CHILDREN
SUPPORTED BY
BARNARDO'S OLD
MARKET SERVICES

378

CHILDREN
REFERRED TO
BARNARDO'S
MISSING SERVICE

CURRENT FIGURES FROM BCC

182

CHILDREN CURRENTLY
ASSESSED AS BEING AT
RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION IN
BRISTOL

169

CHILDREN CURRENTLY
ASSESSED AS BEING AT
RISK OF CHILD CRIMINAL
EXPLOITATION IN BRISTOL

What do others think?

“This is brilliant work, innovative and so necessary”

Sarah Crew
Chief Constable,
Avon and Somerset
Police

“You have worked incredibly hard to build and maintain a rapport with the girls and the results evidence this”

PC Angharad
South Wales Police
(following shadowing shift with aim to replicate)

“Here at Barnardo’s we are extremely proud of what the Night Light Team have achieved. The whole project is a testament to what partnership working can accomplish when there is a shared goal and vision. The thing that makes Night Light so special is its ability to empower the women to be equal partners in safeguarding children, while also providing them with the care and respect they need and deserve”

Sinitta Watkins
Children’s Service Manager
Barnardo’s Old Market Services (Bristol)

“We all deserve to be kept safe and to understand what some of the dangers are out on the streets- and that’s kind of what Night Light does”

Young person supported by Night Light

“Night Light is just phenomenal, the Team engage the women, in a sensitive non-judgemental way, providing support & information to reduce the risks that they face. In doing so this reduces the risk of exploitation to the young people in our community.”

Tracey Tudor, Services Manager,
One25

“A regular sex worker has said she will talk to the Night Light team, knowing one partner is the police, but not to other officers. This has empowered her to share several significant disclosures that have enabled the police to increase safety for both her and children.”

“The National Working Group (NWG) values the innovative and creative work of Night Light . We particularly welcome the partnership focus on achieving safeguarding outcomes for both young people and adults . Night Light has shared their learning and practice etc through presentations at our national forums and they always receive such positive feedback . They are always happy to meet and give support to other organisations who are looking to develop a similar approach”

NWG Network

Members of the NPCC sex working group, lead by DCC Vajzovic were privileged enough to go out with the dedicated, passionate officers and partners whose sole purpose is protection and identification of vulnerabilities on the streets of Bristol. The street workers engaged with the Sex Work Liaison Officers and partners, it appeared that these workers felt a sense of relief just knowing that officers were nearby. It is reassuring that Bristol has officers and partners that are not only proactive in locating vulnerable street workers, but they were also targeting the perpetrators and proactively dealing with their offending with out of court resolutions. This proactivity acts as a deterrent along with the presence of the officers on the streets.

A YEAR OF AWARDS



LOCAL AWARD

Rose and Jo were presented with a local Policing Award for Excellence in honour of their work in Bristol on Night Light

NATIONAL AWARDS

Night Light were the proud winners of the NPCC (National Police Chief Council) Violence Against Women and Girls award for their VAWG related work focused on seldom heard from communities



Jo won the national Frontline Social Work award for Innovation in recognition of her pioneering and implementing Night Light

Spreading the Night Light word...

We have delivered presentations to local and national services to raise awareness and share best practice





LAST YEAR'S AIMS

01

Train more Night Light staff

To ensure Night Light remains on the agenda

02

03

Expand our reach

Focus on boys

04

05

Spread the word!

01

We have trained up 5 new team members which enables us to deliver more Night Light shifts.

02

Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police remain committed to resourcing Night Light as an integral part of Bristol's safeguarding response.

03

3 other police forces have shadowed Night Light with the aim of setting up the project in their geographical areas. Partner agencies have also requested training in the scheme.

04

Several training sessions have been delivered to partners within Bristol City Council to help raise awareness of boys and young men at risk of child sexual exploitation.

05

We have presented locally and nationally to around 15 organisations to help spread the Night Light word. An Avon and Somerset social media article helped to highlight the project forcewide.

WHAT'S NEXT...



01

Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police are in conversation with the Hydrant Programme, a national policing initiative that supports the work of the NPCC. They are currently exploring facilitating an evaluation of Night Light to aid a strategic national roll out of the project.

02

The BBC are in the process of developing a television and Radio 4 documentary to highlight the work of Night Light.

03

We are exploring funding opportunities to increase the capacity of the Night Light leads.

04

We are developing resources to support other areas to implement Night Light in a way that ensures quality intervention that keeps the women and children at the centre and maintains the Night Light core values.

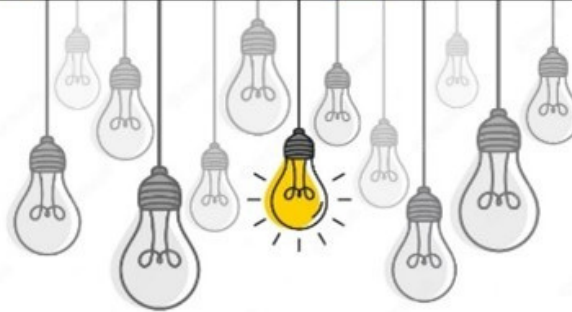
05

As with last year, we want to continue to spread the Night Light word and raise awareness of children, young people and women at risk of exploitation in the night time economy.



BARNARDOS

NIGHT LIGHT



**Shining a light
on night-time exploitation and
harm**

**For further information about
Bristol's Night Light project
please contact:**

Barnardo's on 0117 934 9726

**or email the Night Light Leads:
jo.ritchie@barnardos.org.uk**

Rosemary.Brown@avonandsomerset.police.uk



**Click on this QR code to watch the
Night Light Video**