



NIGHT LIGHT

Impact Report 2025



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'.

About us...

The Night Light team are passionate about empowering vulnerable street sex workers, helping them to recognise their value in reducing harm and safeguarding some of Bristol's most at-risk children. Their work tackles violence against women and children head-on, with the ambition of stopping exploitation and preventing children from becoming vulnerable adults themselves.

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

The project began in 2020 following a major police investigation that uncovered a network of men trafficking and exploiting children in areas of Bristol linked to street sex work. Recognising that these areas were hotspots for harm, the team saw the need to work directly with street sex workers as key partners in safeguarding.

From 7pm into the early hours, the Night Light team patrols streets where sex work is most visible. Their objective is to build trusting relationships with the women, who often act as the "eyes and ears" in identifying risks to children. The women are supported to share intelligence about young people at risk, as well as information on individuals who may pose a threat. They are also encouraged to raise concerns about their own safety and that of their peers, helping to prevent both child and adult exploitation.



Shining a light
on night-time exploitation and harm

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 challenges 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.

Barnardo's and Avon and Somerset Police share a common purpose through Night Light: to safeguard children and vulnerable women from exploitation and harm.



A Shared Vision

Avon & Somerset Police and Barnardo's

Avon and Somerset Police

complement this by focusing on building trust and confidence with communities, particularly women in street sex work. Their commitment aligns with the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda, prioritising the pursuit of perpetrators while safeguarding victims. The role of the Sex Work Liaison Officer is central—improving reporting, disrupting exploitation, and ensuring that crimes against sex workers are taken seriously.

Barnardo's brings decades of experience working with children and families in Bristol, recognising that hidden groups often fall through the gaps of mainstream services. Their approach is rooted in assertive outreach, meeting children where they are, building trust, and ensuring access to specialist support. By advocating for safer, healthier childhoods, Barnardo's ensures that no child is left unseen or unsupported.

Together, Barnardo's and the Police form a partnership that blends care with enforcement. By treating women as equal partners in safeguarding, they not only protect children but also challenge stigma and rebuild trust in systems that too often fail vulnerable groups.

WHAT HAPPENS ON A NIGHT LIGHT SHIFT?

A recent shift with the Night Light team...

7 PM

Prior to heading out, the Night Light team– Rose Brown, Jo Ritchie and Jess Burns (qualified Social Worker and much valued new team member) – met at the Police Station for briefing. It was highlighted to them that two of the women had reported being violently raped and physically assaulted by a male of a similar description. These assaults had taken place within the preceding two weeks.

DURING THE SHIFT:

- 9 women were seen, 8 women individually engaged with the team
- 5 concerning customers were raised by the women, with 1 specifically flagged as posing a risk to children
- 1 child raised by a woman was identified as a safeguarding concern

KEY DISCLOSURES:

9:36 PM

- One woman disclosed a disturbing encounter with a known punter who requested she role-play as a child in a sexually exploitative scenario. She also reported being robbed by another male and shared concerns about her housing and health. Consent was sought and information was shared with relevant partners to support her around these disclosures and her current needs, intelligence was submitted in relation to the dangerous male and research conducted around his risks.

10:15 PM

- Another woman disclosed that she had returned to street sex work and was in need of support. Her baby's social worker was updated to reflect her current situation to ensure both her and her baby were appropriately and safely responded to.

00:15 AM

- A third woman disclosed a rape that occurred the previous morning. The perpetrator matched the description of a male linked to two rape disclosures raised in the briefing held at the beginning of the shift. She was supported by our team and given a phone to facilitate support and contact beyond the shift. Police have since taken forward investigative actions.



00:30 AM

- Soon after this, a fourth woman shared a similar rape disclosure which we believed to involve the same suspect. Due to her extreme vulnerabilities, including complex health needs, she was not in the position to provide a more detailed account in the night. She did however agree for us to pass on these concerns to the One25 project who could offer her follow up support.

02:08 AM

- A fifth woman was seen twice during the shift. On her second encounter, she disclosed having just been raped and physically assaulted. The suspect, matching the same description as previous disclosures, was arrested. This woman is typically quite guarded with professionals, on this night and due to the relationship cultivated over time with the team, she bravely engaged and provided early evidence to support a police investigation.

04:30 AM

- Having completed all relevant safeguarding actions and made a plan with the women, the shift came to an end.

OTHER SAFEGUARDING ACTIONS:

- Vehicle registration plates linked to concerning pickups were recorded and shared with police intelligence teams.
- The team provided engagement items, emotional support, and follow up referrals to housing and health services where appropriate.
- The Night Light team met with the fifth woman in the following days and supported her to provide a recorded statement. They will support her throughout the criminal justice process, from report to court and beyond. The male is currently in prison on remand, awaiting trial.

REFLECTIONS

This shift underscored the critical role Night Light plays in building trust and enabling disclosures that would otherwise remain hidden. The consistent description of a perpetrator across multiple women led to swift police action and the arrest of a suspect. The team's presence continues to be a lifeline for women facing exploitation, violence, and homelessness.

SAFEGUARDING A CHILD AND DISRUPTING A HIGH-RISK OFFENDER

During a Night Light shift, a woman disclosed highly concerning intelligence. She reported that a male customer had a child—believed to be around 15 years old—in his car. The man was openly bragging about having sex with the child and discussed purchasing sexual services in her presence. Distressed by this disclosure, the woman provided a detailed description of the man and his vehicle. Intelligence was submitted, and research was conducted, but at that time the male could not be identified.

Several months later, plain clothes officers engaged with a punter and a sex worker in the red light area. At the same time, the same woman who had originally shared the intelligence approached the Night Light team during an engagement shift. She immediately recognised the man and confirmed he was the same individual she had previously reported.

Real-time research was conducted by the Sex Work Liaison Officer, revealing that the male had provided false personal details. His true identity was established, confirming that he was living with a single mother and her two children.

Further checks uncovered a deeply concerning history of offending, including:

- **Penetrative sexual activity with a girl aged 13–15**
- **Indecent assault on a 13-year-old girl**
- **Indecent assault on a female child at a fairground**
- **Possession of an offensive weapon**
- **Harassment and domestic abuse-related incidents**

OUTCOMES

- The children living at the male's address **were urgently safeguarded**.
- A new investigation was launched in another police force area to identify the child previously seen with him.
- It was confirmed that the child was in fact **13 years old**, not 15 as initially believed.
- The child is now working with police regarding potential offences committed against her by this male.
- The male's true identity and known alias have been formally linked and shared across safeguarding and law enforcement agencies.

IMPACT AND LEARNING

This case powerfully demonstrates the value of trusted relationships between the Night Light team and women involved in street sex work. The woman's willingness to re-engage and share critical intelligence directly enabled the identification of a **high-risk offender** and the **safeguarding of a vulnerable child**.

IT ALSO HIGHLIGHTS:

- The importance of **real-time, trauma-informed engagement**.
- The effectiveness of **multi-agency collaboration** in disrupting perpetrators of child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- The central role of sex workers as trusted partners in safeguarding, ensuring that their lived experience and insight remain at the heart of Night Light's approach.

Reach & Impact

2024 Figures



20

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



16

The team have safeguarded 16 children and young people located during Night Light shifts. 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

2025 Figures



17

In the past 12 months, the women have highlighted 17 children and young people at risk of exploitation



13

The team have safeguarded 13 children and young people located during Night Light shifts



134

The team have had 134 conversations with the women about Night Light



100

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



81

The women have made 81 reports about dangerous men



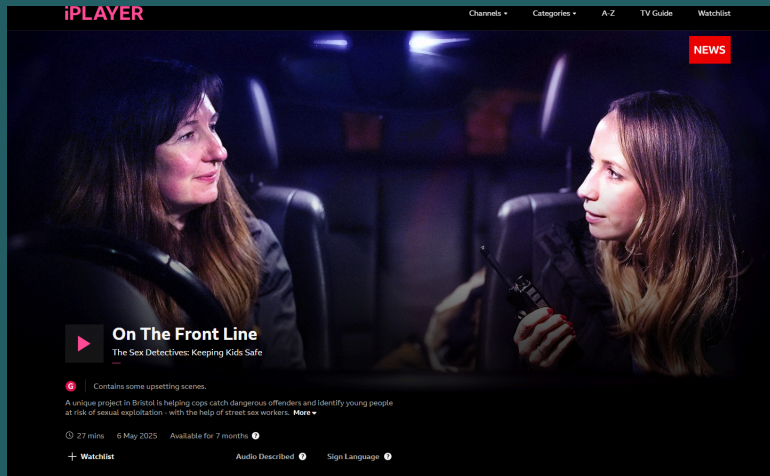
11

Partner agencies have highlighted 11 children to Night Light seen on the streets at risk of exploitation

The full preventative impact of Night Light cannot always be quantified, but this year provides clear evidence of its effectiveness. Intelligence shared by the women has directly resulted in several high-risk men being identified, questioned, and arrested. These decisive interventions have disrupted offenders, prevented further abuse, and significantly increased safety for children and women who would otherwise have remained at risk.

NIGHT LIGHT HITS THE MEDIA!

2025 has been an exciting year for Night Light with lots of media coverage



We were delighted to be part of a BBC Documentary, “The Sex Detectives: Keeping Kids Safe” which gives a frontline lens into the project. It follows investigative journalist Rachel Stonehouse as she interviews key figures, including police, sex workers (anonymously), children and the Night Light Team.

[On The Front Line - The Sex Detectives: Keeping Kids Safe - BBC iPlayer](#)

“The wonderful work of Night Light... Raw, authentic, compelling, human, real, and inspiring. The documentary beautifully captures the transformational and yet very practical effect of great policing, combined with effective partnership working. It showcases how winning the trust and building the confidence and self-esteem of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised women in our communities can lead to remarkable change. The women featured in the documentary truly embody resilience and strength, and their stories were profoundly moving.”

Chief Constable Sarah Crew

A follow-up BBC article echoes sentiments that the project’s success is drawing interest from other parts of the UK for potential roll-out. It emphasizes the unique visibility of “the highest-risk children” who are often otherwise hidden.

[Bristol street sex workers help police to stop child abuse - BBC News](#)

Rose and Jo were honoured to be interviewed by Nuala McGovern in the Women’s Hour studio. You can listen here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002btxx>



This prompted other local and national media coverage including interviews with BBC’s local Points West News, 5Live Radio broadcast and ‘that’s life! Crime Scene’ Magazine.

LAST YEAR'S AIMS



- 01 Operation Hydrant, a national policing initiative that supports the work of the NPCC, are compiling an application to the College of Policing for Night Light to be included in the Promising Practice Bank.
- 02 Take a look at the media page above!
- 03 We continue to explore funding options in the hope that we can fulfil one of our aims to assist in the project being replicated nationally.
- 04 Night Light have now had discussions with 16 other police organisations following them expressing interest in the project.
- 05 With help of the media, the NPCC, discussions with other Police and non police organisations including the National Working Group, the word has very much been spread! Night Light was cited as a best practice example in the NPCC's (National Police Chief Council) guidance on Sex Work and Policing. You can read this here: [Sex-work-national-police-guidance-2025.pdf](#)

WHAT'S NEXT...



- 01 Night Light are varying how we operate by adjusting the nights and times we run and working with the police solely focusing on engagement in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation and Adult Sexual Exploitation.
- 02 We plan to continue to support other Police organisations and partner agencies to roll out the project in their respective areas.
- 03 We continue to explore funding opportunities to increase the capacity of the Night Light leads and their reach.
- 04 In collaboration with Operation Hydrant, we hope to achieve inclusion in the College of Policing Promising Practice Bank, which has national reach.
- 05 As with every 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.



Shining a light on night-time exploitation and harm

**For further information about
Bristol's Night Light project
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**Click on this QR code to watch the
Night Light Video**