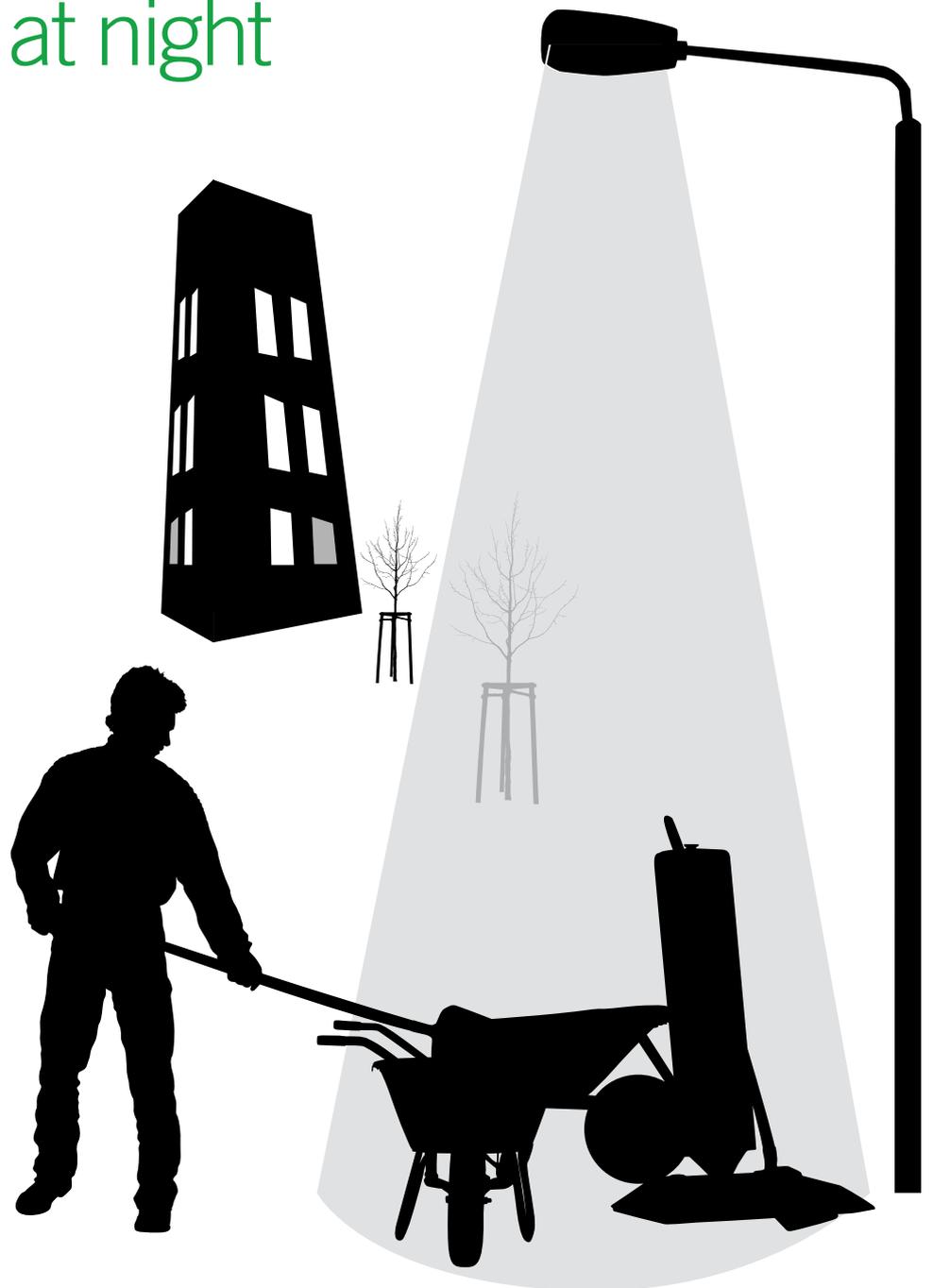


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# Rough Nights

The growing dangers  
of working at night

Will Norman



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## About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation brings together insight, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs. We have a 55 year track record of success with ventures such as the Open University, Which?, the School for Social Entrepreneurs and Healthline (the precursor of NHS Direct). We work across the UK and internationally – carrying out research, influencing policy, creating new organisations and supporting others to do the same, often with imaginative uses of new technology. We now have over 60 staff, working on over 40 ventures at any one time, with staff in New York and Paris as well as London and Birmingham in the UK.

[www.youngfoundation.org](http://www.youngfoundation.org)

## About the Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest funder of the voluntary and community sector after government, currently responsible for delivering around half of all funds raised for good causes by the National Lottery. It funds a diverse range of programmes and projects in the fields of health, education, the environment and charitable purposes. Its focus is on delivering improvements to communities and the lives of those most in need across the UK. As one of the funders of the Young Foundation's research study, 'Sinking and swimming: understanding Britain's unmet needs', BIG was pleased to support this follow-up study on night workers.

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)



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## 1

# Introduction

Night work is not a new phenomenon; evidence of working night shifts goes back at least as far as Roman times and levels rose during the Industrial Revolution. However, it was the transformation to heavily mechanised industrial processes during the 20th century – and the proliferation of electric lighting – which saw dramatic increases in round-the-clock working. Modern industry is dependent on expensive equipment that becomes more cost-effective if it is operating, and therefore manned, 24 hours a day. Changing lifestyles in the late 20th century have led to the rapid growth of the 24 hour service economy as workers demand more flexible working hours and consumers want shops, services and leisure activities to be open later into the evening, if not throughout the night. Not only do all these shops, banks, call-centres, transport systems etc need to be staffed beyond the traditional nine-to-five working day, but the maintenance, cleaning, restocking etc require staff to work long after these services have closed to the public. The result is that levels of night working are increasing and are likely to continue to do so if, as Leon Kreitzman argues, we are moving towards a 24 hour society<sup>1</sup>.

This report explores the lives of those people who work at night: the men and women who keep our hospitals open, clean our offices, allow us to cancel lost credit cards, serve us drinks in a club or drive us home afterwards. It tells their stories. Who are they? What jobs do they do? Why do they work at night? How does night work affect them? What impact does it have on their social and family lives?

We found that regularly working at night exposes people to all sorts of dangers and risks. A growing body of medical evidence shows that working night shifts increases the likelihood of developing a range of health problems, including different cancers, gastro-intestinal conditions, cardio-vascular disease and problems in pregnancy. The clinical risks are increased by lifestyle choices. We observed that many night workers had poor diets due to the lack of facilities open at night and had propensity to smoke and drink more. As one interviewee told us, “All my colleagues eat junk food. You can tell who’s on the way to A&E. They eat crap, don’t exercise, and don’t sleep much. A mate of mine who works nights had a heart attack at 46. It’s not good.”

Tiredness and fatigue are the inevitable consequences of working at night and result in lowering cognitive performance and ones ability to concentrate. Night workers are more likely to cause or suffer from an accident at work – indeed some of the biggest industrial accidents in history have happened due to human error on night shifts. The dangers are not just present in the workplace, but also on the journey to and from work. Night workers are twice as likely to be involved in a car accident on the way home as those working during the day. As one of ambulance drivers we spoke to said, “I get in the car and drive back with the windows open. After a busy night you feel drunk, all fuzzy, you know? There are nights when I’ve had no recollection of getting home.”

We found that night working also impacts on family and social lives. One interviewee complained that he and his wife were “like ships that passed in

## Kings Cross Underground Station

At 2am the station is heaving. Between 200 and 400 people work there every night. The corridors and platforms are full of people on ladders adding emergency lighting, building new ramps, assessing how to solve drainage problems, switching electrical supplies, repairing the ticket machines, checking the rails and points. “Every underground station is open at night,” the station supervisor explains as he shows me around. “Everything down here is at least fifty years old. It all needs checking, repairing and modernising. There just isn’t enough time. People need to get in and out with their gear and everything needs to be tidy before the first trains roll out. The tunnel dust gets everywhere; it permeates everything down here. Cleaning up takes ages. Without night workers, London just wouldn’t run.”

the morning” when he worked nights. Others complained of being too tired to socialise properly or being exhausted when they had time with their children. As one of the security staff we interviewed commented, “I’d say 80% of door staff have no social life. We get home, see the kids and then crash for a few hours.”

This report provides a window into a world of work that is unknown to most of us. We argue that night working can harm your health, your family and social lives and your happiness. However, the growing numbers of people who work at night are unaware of the risks they face. Britain’s nocturnal workforce is largely invisible and unsupported. Government, employers and the trade unions are doing far too little to raise awareness of the hazards associated with night working and as a result most night workers are unaware of the practical steps they can take to reduce the risks. Urgent changes are needed to ensure our 24 hour society does not develop at the expense of the health, safety and wellbeing of Britain’s 1.3 million night workers.

## 1.1 Methodology

This work builds on an exploratory study which was part of the Young Foundation’s work mapping unmet needs which featured in the report *Sinking and swimming: understanding Britain’s unmet needs*.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout 2009 and 2010 we followed night workers as they worked, observing their working lives, asking questions where necessary, listening to their stories, to their experience and to their views. Where it wasn’t possible to spend the entire night with people, interviews were carried out. In total over 50 people took part in the research, including police officers, street cleaners, shop fitters, cleaners, lorry drivers, security guards, carers, ambulance staff, shopkeepers and taxi drivers.\*

The primary research method was ethnography. Ethnography is an approach to research that was developed by anthropologists to understand people within their own social and cultural contexts. The primary method of the ethnographer is participant observation, where a researcher spends time with the people they are studying, participating in their lives, asking questions and observing how people act and behave. One of the benefits of this approach is that it forces researchers away from their existing assumptions about people. This is particularly important when looking at a subject on which there is very little existing research. Rather than going in with assumptions and a list of pre-defined questions, ethnography involves the researcher asking questions in response to what they see going on around them. This allows the researcher to validate what is said with what is actually happening. It can often reveal the discrepancies between actions and words. People’s actions and thoughts are dependent on a vast range of factors, and what they say they do in one context is not necessarily what they actually do in another. The explanation participants offer during time with a researcher is often much more revealing than what could be gleaned from a questionnaire or focus group.

### Notes

\* We are enormously grateful to all of the night workers who helped us with the research and kindly let us shadow and observe them at work. We have changed the identities of those involved to protect their anonymity.

While revealing a lot, immersing oneself in the lives of other can be stressful for the researcher, as the field notes below show:

#### NOTES FROM THE FIELD DIARY

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It's just after 10pm and I'm sitting on the Number 38 bus weaving my way through Hackney. My fellow passengers are talking about their plans for the evening. Three girls are talking about which club they will probably end up in. I'm on my way to a police station. I am spending the weekend following a team from the Metropolitan Police on their night shift. It is my first time doing a night shift and I'm nervous. I've just spent the last twenty minutes trying on different outfits. What do the police wear when they're not in uniform? Shirts? Jeans? Jumpers? Fleeeces?

I spent the day trying, unsuccessfully, to rest up and wondering if it's possible to stockpile sleep. I failed miserably and ended up answering emails and playing with my children. They have been dispatched with their mother to my in-laws' house for the weekend. I hope to get some sleep tomorrow morning.

I've been an ethnographer – or a professional stalker, as one of my friends recently described me – for the last ten years. I have followed around everyone from housewives in South African townships to millionaires in Delhi, but I am rarely this anxious. I don't know why. It's not that I don't know what to expect, that's par for the course in this job. I'm more concerned about how I'll cope with a lack of sleep. If fatherhood has taught me one thing it's how crotchety I can get with broken nights. What about a whole night out? Will I be able to last the shift? What on earth was I thinking when I dreamt up this project?

# Who are Britain's night workers?

# 2

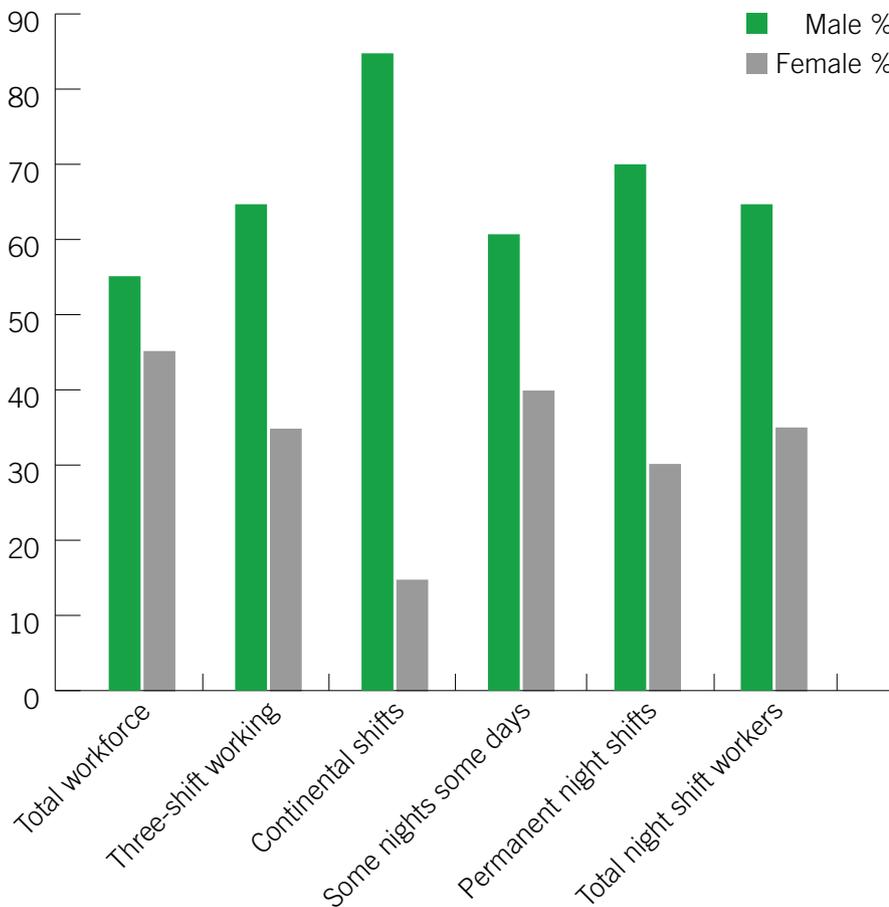
The nocturnal workforce is split into two distinct groups: those who work at night at regular intervals as part of a rotating shift system; and a smaller group who permanently work at night. The Labour Force Survey shows that over 1.3m people in the UK regularly work at night. Of these, over 300,000 people are permanent night workers (see Figure 1). However, it is likely that this is a considerable under-estimate as many of those who we met during this research were reluctant to provide personal information because they were working informally or as part of an unregistered second job such as driving mini-cabs, cleaning or security staff.

**FIGURE 1: THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WORKING AT NIGHT IN THE UK.<sup>3</sup>**

Shift	Labour Force Survey definition	No. of people working
Three-shift working	The day is divided into three working periods - morning, afternoon and night. This kind of shift work usually, but not always, involves one or more weeks of mornings, followed by one or more weeks of afternoons, followed by one or more weeks of nights.	436,028
Continental shifts	This is a continuous three-shift system that rotates rapidly e.g. three mornings, then two afternoons, then two nights. Usually there is a break between shift changes.	110,737
Sometimes nights/days	Sometimes night and sometimes day shifts.	491,397
Night shift	If this is full-time, most commonly 1800-0600, and usually continuing after midnight. This category is used only for permanent night work.	321,830
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,359,992</b>

The night workforce is predominately male, as shown in Figure 2. In part, this gender imbalance is due to the nature of the jobs that work at night, such as the construction workers, engineers, security etc, which are traditionally male dominated industries. However, as the night service economy continues to grow, it is likely that in the future more women will be working at night.

**FIGURE 2: GENDER BALANCE OF NIGHT SHIFT WORKERS**



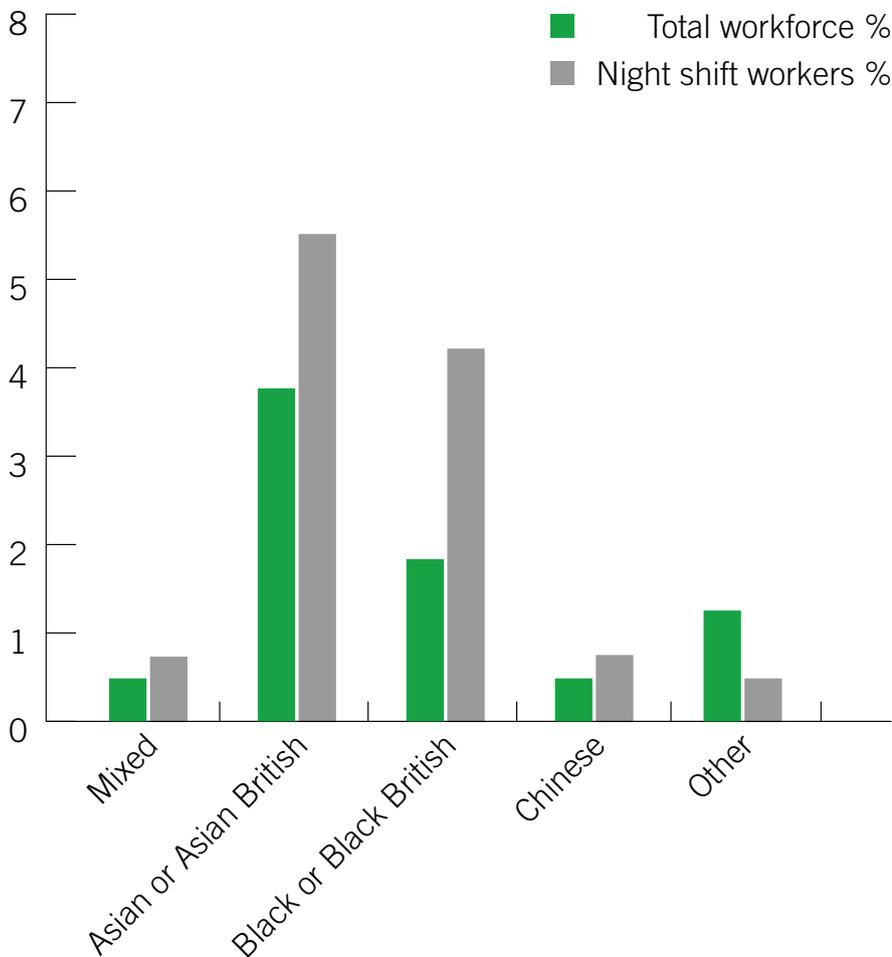
### The student night worker

Rafiq is a 22 year old Pakistani who has lived in the UK for four years. He works night shifts in a small grocery shop and off-licence in the London Borough of Westminster. Rafiq works from 10pm to 6am five days a week. He is studying to be a chartered accountant and is engrossed in a text book when I walk into the shop. Rafiq explains that he attends college three days a week and is able to study when the shop quiets down from 3am to 6am. "It's usually busy at weekends and quiet during the week. The nights are much calmer than days. The problem is sleep. I'm sure I get sick more often. I feel dizzy and my face swells up, you know? ... I've been doing this for two years. Another six months and I'll stop. It's good because I can study and get paid at the same time. I actually get paid 30% more at night. But my social life is finished, man, totally gone. I don't see anyone. I don't have a girlfriend because of nights and I can't see how I'd meet anyone new. It's impossible." Rafiq advises me to avoid drinking coffee and Red Bull. "They make you feel bad. One cup of tea during the night, that's what I do. Exercise is important too. I try to swim at the weekend if I can, but often I just want to sleep."

Young people are increasingly doing shift work – men aged 16-19 rose from 10% (1993) to 18% (2003), women aged 16-19 rose from 12% to 20%. One in five women aged 16-24 report doing shift work as their regular work.<sup>4</sup> This rise in shift work may be associated with the need to finance higher education – and if so the increasing cost of university courses will result in more people taking on bar work and other night jobs.

The majority of the night workforce is white (86%), but this is a significantly lower proportion than in the overall workforce (92% white). Conversely, there are proportionately more people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds working at night, compared to the overall UK workforce, as shown in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3: BME GROUPS WORKING NIGHTSHIFTS**



During the time we spent observing the night workers, it became clear that there was a difference between the types of jobs held by the white night shift workers and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Those from BME backgrounds appeared far more likely to be doing the jobs that paid less, were less secure or more menial, such as cleaning and security jobs, refuse collecting, and mini-cab driving. The more professional jobs with rotating shift patterns, such as the police, ambulance service, and London Underground Sta-

tion staff were predominantly white. In some jobs the roles were completely split along ethnic lines, for example there were teams of construction workers on the underground who were almost entirely Afrikaans, while the station cleaners were groups of West Africans or Bulgarians. The rickshaw drivers in Soho were mainly Columbians with smaller Turkish and Polish contingents.

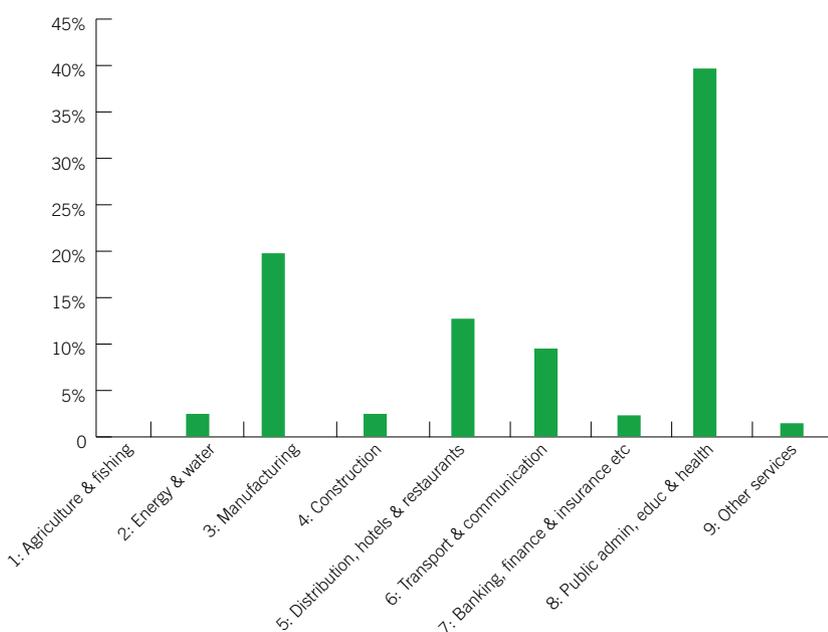
Much of the night economy is invisible to most of us. However, when one spends time walking the streets, hanging out in the coffee shops, looking beyond the closed office doors or being shown around a city's hidden infrastructures, the diversity of the types of work that are happening every night quickly becomes clear. There are the cleaners, the hospital staff, the emergency services, the security guards, the night bus drivers, postal workers, mini-cab drivers, prison staff, factory workers, call centre operators, transport engineers, carers, haulers, market workers, the people who monitor the sewage systems, power stations and computer server hubs, to list but a few.

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of the UK's night workers by industrial sector according to the Labour Force Survey. Although just over 20% of the night shift workers are part of the manufacturing sector, the service sector is much more active at night, with the public sector (most notably health) the biggest employer.

### Unique to the night

Many of the jobs people do at night are the same as those in the day. However, there are some roles that are unique to the night. Phil works in a coffee shop near Old Compton Street in the heart of London's 'Gay Village'. Phil's job is unique to the night time economy in this part of the city. His role is to defuse tensions before they develop into conflicts. "The toilets are the worst. You go in there and you can find six guys all naked in all sorts of positions. The lesbians are even worse. I've got to sort it all out without getting heavy handed. We can't have the police in here every night. We'd get shut down."

**FIGURE 4: NIGHT WORKERS BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR**



Although it does not feature in the Labour Force Survey, the voluntary and community sector plays an important role in the night time economy: primarily by meeting the needs of people at night. While the public sector employs the

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largest number of night workers, the majority of our public service infrastructure is designed for use in the daytime. However, particular problems (isolation, vulnerability, violence) appear more common or regularly surface at night. Those services that do operate at night are ill equipped to adequately meet these needs, resulting in a number of different people falling between the gaps or being marginalised. We came across a lot of voluntary and community sector organisations who were providing specialist services to try address this: drop-in centres for the homeless, refuges and crisis centres, help lines such as the Samaritans (whose calls peak during the night time), care homes, hospices, and outreach workers providing support to a range of clients from young people to drug users and prostitutes. These organisations, and their night staff and volunteers, play a vital role in ensuring that people are supported and needs are met around the clock.

## 3

# Working the night shift

With an increasingly wide variety of jobs and tasks being carried out at night, it is impossible to generalise about the nature of night work. In some occupations, the night shift is a much quieter time to work. The security guard we spent the night with carried out regular patrols of the large empty headquarters of a multinational company. However, most of his time was spent reading the paper or watching television behind the desk in the desolate reception area. "I suppose I should make more use of this time; studying or something. But I never get around to it. I'm knackered most nights."

Some night shifts are much shorter than their daytime counterparts. Many of the contractors repairing or testing equipment on the London Underground could only work from 1am to 5am because of the trains, yet they are paid for a full shift. Others found that working at night allowed them to do other jobs (such as many of the cleaners) or to study during the day. A large number of workers said that working at night let them use the day to do their chores or get other things done. As Kevin, a construction supervisor who has been working nights on a permanent basis for 12 years, said, "There are pros and cons to nights. Working nights means I can get stuff done during the day. I finish up, go home and sleep until about 12. After that I can get the car fixed or do the shopping. In any other job I'd have to tell the governor and you can't just skip out to go to the dentist or whatever."

In some cases people are paid more to work at night than they might be during the day. For example the shop fitters who were interviewed were paid 50% extra after 10pm, and the Westminster traffic wardens are paid £9.75 per hour compared with their daytime counterparts who receive between seven and eight pounds an hour. However, other night workers were far more vulnerable. Several of the cleaners we spoke to were undocumented migrants and were being paid less than the minimum wage. However, without legal rights they were not in a position to protest. "It's the only job I can get. What else can I do?" Even for those who were in the UK legally, night work was not always a choice, but the only job that they could find (see text box below).

The nature of many jobs is very different at night. Some saw the night as a quiet time that allowed them to get on the work they felt they were trained to do without interruptions or distractions, as one of the police sergeants explained:

*It's a different style of policing at night. It's actually stopping crime. We have a proactive approach, stopping people and vehicles rather than just chasing all over London reacting to people's calls. During the day the traffic's terrible and you just can't get anywhere. You end up dealing with tourists and people all over the place. You'll see, it's a very different city at night.*

However, for others the night is a much more stressful time. This was the case in those jobs that had to provide services for the general public. Night bus

## The tunnel cleaners

Marko and Anka are standing on the tube tracks kitting up with transparent plastic bags, torches, rucksacks and mechanical grabbers. They walk the London Underground tunnels every night collecting litter. Tonight they are scheduled to walk between Kings Cross and Edgware Road. On average they collect about 3 large sacks of rubbish each. Both Marko and Anka are Bulgarian. Marko has been doing the job for three years and Anka only six months. "I do it because I need the money, only for the money." Marko said. "When I started this I didn't think I'd still be doing it in three years time. I need the money. What else can I do?"

drivers thought they had many more problems and issues with violence and abuse at night, mainly due to people who had drunk too much or drug users. The increased level of aggression and rudeness was apparent during the night we spent in a kebab shop (see text box). During this shift the clientele changed dramatically from people politely picking up a takeaway meal in the early evening, to the abusive and violent drunks who were on their way home after a night out.

### A NIGHT AT A KEBAB SHOP

It's a Friday night in a takeaway restaurant in Bristol. Five men in red t-shirts, all from Northern Cyprus, staff the restaurant. All of us are sweating in the heat of the grills, fryers and kebab racks. The night shift starts with a steady flow of customers ordering food for dinner. Many of them appear to be regulars and engage in polite banter and small talk with the staff. As it gets later, the customer base changes and the shop fills up with people on their way home from pubs and clubs. Most of them have been out drinking and the atmosphere is very different. The staff are more tense and on edge. The customers are much louder and more aggressive.

Erkan has been working in this shop for two years, but has been "in this business for ten years. That's what you do if you are from my country. If you can't speak good English and you are in Britain then all you can do is this. Kebabs and takeaway." I ask Erkan about the night shifts, "People don't understand what it is like. You get stupid people, crazy ones. 'Give me chips,' they shout. Then they want hamburger sauce and don't want to pay for it. They come in for change. 'Sorry, we don't have any,' I say and they start swearing and everything. When they are drunk, they are terrible. You get all the drunks at night."

When I asked if people ever get violent, Erkan says that people are fighting all the time and pulls out two large black batons from under the counter. As he waves these about explaining how they are for protection, I think they seem slightly redundant as a threat considering his colleague is standing next to me sharpening the menacing looking two-foot long knife used for trimming the Doner Kebab turning on the large spit at the window.

Erkan reflects on his work, "I don't want to carry on. I get tired and stressed and it affects my health. I'd never do this work again. You're like a robot: come in; go home; I don't go to the pub; I don't see my friends. I spend what time I can with my kids, but then I'm tired and in a bad mood. No, it's not good for you. People need to understand that."

Most violent crime is committed at night particularly around concentrations of nightclubs and pubs.<sup>5</sup> In London 120 extra police officers are drafted in at weekends to patrol the entertainment hotspots in Westminster and Soho. Our interviews with nightclub security staff suggested that these extra officers were needed, as they witnessed and had to break up fights on a nightly basis. Nearly all the incidents we were called to with the police at night, involved drugs, alcohol, violence or a combination of all three.

The time we spent with the emergency services, in hospitals, door security staff and the street cleaners all showed how much excessive alcohol consumption costs society – the text box below recounts one incident that took up hours of police time as well as the time and resources of a busy hospital.

#### ALCOHOL AND THE NIGHT

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At 12.30am a young couple flag down the police car. They point over to a man in a shabby suit, in his late fifties who is staggering wildly in and out of the traffic. One of the police sergeants runs over and helps the man back to the pavement, where he collapses against a wall. The police sergeant tries to talk to the man, who is clearly drunk, “What’s your name? Sir, what’s your name?” The man responds by singing loudly. Unable to find out his name or anything else, the police attempt to sober him up by walking up and down the road for 15 minutes. This has no effect. “We’re going to have to call an ambulance. There’s no such thing as a drunk-tank anymore. We can’t just lock them up and let them sober up. There’s a risk they’ll have a cardiac arrest: health and safety. They’ve got to go into hospital.” An hour later, the ambulance hasn’t arrived and the man has soiled his trousers. “This is a fucking waste of time. We’ll see if we can get permission to drive him in ourselves.”

After two hours, the police are eventually allowed to drive the man to an accident and emergency department at a nearby hospital. The A&E is busy and the nursing staff want nothing to do with the drunk man. He smells awful and is staggering around the waiting room, singing. The nurses are adamant that he has no health problems and that he is the police’s problem. The police insist he has to stay in at the hospital. Eventually, the nurses give in and the police leave. “Booze,” sighs one of the policemen as we drive away, “Booze, drugs and fights. It’s always the same. That’s nights for you.”

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One of the ambulance men commented that people seemed to be more vulnerable at night, or least those who were most vulnerable surfaced at night. Like the ambulance men and women, the police are another one of the frontline services that have to deal with consequences of unmet need at night:

*The police van turns a corner and we see a couple arguing in the shadows of the back street. As the blue lights go on the man looks up, momentarily stares at the van and then turns and sprints off in the opposite direction. Two of the policemen jump out of the van and run after him. Jane, the remaining constable, gets out and talks to the young woman. The woman is dressed scruffily and is unstable on her feet. She is speaking incoherently and we have trouble understanding what she is saying. Jane searches her and finds a crack pipe and a several condoms in her pocket. Jane finds a bus pass in another pocket and types the woman's name into the van computer. She is 24, has no registered address and has learning difficulties. The computer profile indicates that the woman has been in trouble with the police for both drugs offences and prostitution. The other two policemen walk back trying to catch their breath, having been unsuccessful in catching the man who ran off. "There's nothing we can do about her," Jane explains as the woman stumbles down the street. "She's done nothing wrong. We can't arrest her. We're not social services. There's nothing we can do. We'll probably see her on this patch again tomorrow night. Sad isn't it?"*

It was clear that particular unmet needs seem to be more prevalent at night, but also that those services that operate at night are only able to treat the symptoms, not solve any problems – leaving many individual service providers cynical and frustrated.

"Night-time [in London] is the lonely time," said one of the paramedics as we started one night shift. "Drinks, drugs and self-harm – you get more of those on nights." The ambulance crews explained that they are called to far more incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide at night, as we were to find out:

*Around midnight we get a call for someone who has cut their wrists. We put on the sirens and accelerate east along the A12. A police car arrives at the small housing estate at the same time as us and our blue lights illuminate the blocks. We climb the stairs and reach the flat, which has a new unpainted front door. "I've been here before," one of the policemen says. "My mate kicked in the old door." There is no need for anyone to break the door down this time, as it is swinging open. We go into a dimly lit, sparsely furnished one bedroom flat. The floor is strewn with clothes, shoes and litter. A young girl in her early twenties is sitting on a sofa, smoking a cigarette, sobbing. The ambulance crew try to comfort*

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*her and put a dressing on the wound on her wrist, which they don't think is serious. "I thought I was getting over depression," she cries, "but I'm obviously not." The police are anxious for the ambulance crew to take her into hospital, as they are unsure what to do. "I don't want to go to hospital," the girl insists. "I've been in loads of times. They don't do anything. They don't give me anything. They can't help." She has self-harmed on a number of occasions and her wrists are covered in scars. The ambulance crew persuade her to come in and see a doctor, but they know the girl is right. "She's not serious enough to be admitted, so she'll sit around in A&E, a nurse will look at her, she'll go home and we'll be back out here in the early hours again. It's a cycle."*

During the same evening we were called to two similar incidents. The ambulance crew explained that this is a common type of night call. They are frequently called out to lonely or isolated young people with psychological needs that are not deemed serious enough to warrant a clinical intervention or admission to hospital. In one case we saw the patient wander out of A&E even before we had processed the paperwork. The ambulance crews were resigned to the fact that it was probable that they would return to the flats to treat the same patients. "We're patching people up but nobody is dealing with the underlying problems."

## 4

# The graveyard shift

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The night workers themselves are also vulnerable. Regularly working nights brings with it a number of different health risks, which the majority of people we spoke to were unaware of.

Working at night inevitably causes sleep deprivation and fatigue because the human body has evolved to be awake during the day and asleep at night. The body is controlled by an internal clock found in the suprachiasmatic nucleus in the hypothalamus gland in the brain. This area of the brain generates the circadian rhythms that regulate processes in the body such as temperature control, hormone production, alertness and sleep. These circadian rhythms run over a 24-hour period and are affected by exposure to light. Many of the processes that are active in our body during the day slow down at night in preparation for sleep. At the same time the sleep hormone melatonin is released from the brain, which lowers alertness and increases the desire to sleep. Our body is designed to sleep at night.

By working at night we are fighting the natural rhythms by staying awake. Equally, when the shift finishes and the worker goes home to sleep during the day, they are battling the body clock that is telling them that they should be awake. Sleep is further hampered by the noise of everyday life: telephone calls, traffic, children playing, road works etc. Many of those we spoke to complained that it was harder to get enough sleep during the summer because it was much hotter and they usually had to have the windows open, making it far noisier. It is hardly surprising that most night workers sleep for less time and have sleep of worse quality than those who work regular hours. If you sleep for less than eight or nine hours a night you gradually build up sleep debt. This is cumulative, so the more you miss, the more sleep you will eventually need.

## 4.1 Accidents

A lack of sleep makes people tired and this can result people making mistakes. Some of the most catastrophic industrial accidents in history have occurred due to human error during night shifts. These include the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island nuclear accidents, the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the Bhopal toxic chemical leak. While these accidents are extreme in their scale, they reflect that night workers are at greater risk of sustaining an occupational injury or causing an accident than those working day shifts.<sup>6,7</sup> A number of studies show that some industrial injuries are three times higher on the night shift compared to the evening shift.<sup>8</sup> Those working night shifts have impaired physical performance, poorer reaction time and mental arithmetic,<sup>9</sup> and overall lower cognitive performance.<sup>10</sup>

During our fieldwork such dips in performance and energy levels were particularly noticeable between 4am and 5.30am in workers across all job types: conversations and jokes dried up, bedside manners became more abrupt, drivers slowed down. People physically changed: red eyes staring into the middle

“I hate nights. Absolutely hate them. Some people actually prefer them. I hate it. I’ve always been an early morning person. Even if I go out with friends, I’d always be the first one home. I find it completely unnatural. It’s got to be significant that the SAS and all that strike at 4 or 5 in the morning because they know that they’ll get the least resistance. People are not alert at that time.”

distance, faces covered in a sheen of cold sweat, shivers as people put on an extra jacket. It was easy to see how accidents could happen.

It is not just the accidents in the workplace that are of concern; many of the night shift workers reported accidents on their journeys home after working through the night. One junior doctor we spent time with had had a near-fatal car accident when he fell asleep at the wheel after a night shift.

#### A JUNIOR DOCTOR'S NEAR FATAL CAR ACCIDENT

“It had been a long shift, really busy. I knew that I was tired, everything in my body was telling me to sleep. But I wanted to get home; you know how it’s always better sleeping in your own bed? I got in the car and opened the windows and had turned up the radio. It’s stupid really looking back on it now, how would that help? But you don’t think properly after working nights. It’s about an hour to get home from the hospital. I got onto the motorway and the next thing I know is that I’m trapped underneath one of those massive lorries. I must have fallen asleep at the wheel and I’d gone straight under the trailer. It tore the whole roof off the car, ripped the headrest off the seat: a complete write-off. I’m lucky that I fell forwards and not backwards, otherwise I’d be dead. I wasn’t really hurt. The fire guys came and cut the car out and an ambulance drove me back to A&E, but apart from the odd bump and bruise I was fine. Lucky, hey?”

Another night worker told us a very similar story:

*By the end of the shift, you’ve got to be careful... I live out in Essex. I get in the car and drive back with the windows open. After a busy night you feel drunk, all fuzzy, you know? There are nights when I’ve had no recollection of getting home. There was this one bloke who worked here who was burning it at both ends. He had a new baby and was punching overtime, nights all the time. He had an accident with a lorry on the way home: ended up dead.*

Alarmingly, such stories were common. Many of the night shift workers that we spoke to had similar stories of road accidents or near misses that had affected them or one of their colleagues. A number of research studies show that those who are doing shift work are increasingly likely to be involved in car accidents, both to and from work. A US study looked at almost 3000 junior doctors who worked multiple extended shifts in a month, often with up to 100-hour working weeks.<sup>11</sup> During the 12 months of the study, 320 crashes were reported. Compared to the control group, it was found that the chance of a junior doctor having a documented crash on the commute home after an extended shift were more than double the odds after a non extended shift. Further, the probability of a crash on the way to work increased by almost 10%. Night work results in

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increased eye closure duration on the journey, and an increased risk of falling asleep at the wheel.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the number of fatigue-related crashes increases in proportion to the time spent at work. These accidents are avoidable and can be reduced by raising awareness.

## 4.2 Health risks

It is not only accidents at work or on the way home that affect night workers. Shift and night work has been linked to a wide range of health problems including breast cancer,<sup>13</sup> prostate cancer,<sup>14</sup> non-Hodgkin's lymphoma,<sup>15</sup> cardiovascular disease,<sup>16</sup> gastrointestinal disorders<sup>17</sup> and pregnancy problems.<sup>18</sup>

The debate continues over the causal relationships between cancer and shift work, with many experts arguing the link is not yet conclusive. Nevertheless, the research evidence continues to grow and in 2007 the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) declared, "shift work that involves circadian disruption is probably carcinogenic to humans."<sup>19</sup> The evidence is strongest for breast cancer, so much so that in 2008 the Danish board of industrial injuries awarded compensation to 37 women with breast cancer who had worked night shifts for at least 20 years.<sup>20</sup>

There are a number of possible reasons why night working increases the risk of cancer:<sup>21</sup>

- Suppressed levels of melatonin production, which has direct and indirect anti-cancer effects
- Sleep disruption stimulates the brain to release glucocorticoids which depress the immune functions
- If the rhythms of digestive functions are out of phase with sleep rhythms, the control of cell and tissue proliferation may be affected
- Decreased production of Vitamin D
- Shift work can result in changes in lifestyle factors such as smoking, diet, alcohol use and exercise.

Many of night workers we spent time with had particularly unhealthy lifestyles, eating large amounts of junk food and smoking excessively; many were overweight and admitted taking little exercise. Nearly everyone thought they drank too much caffeine and there was an obvious alcohol drinking culture associated with many of the jobs. A number of night workers said that they used drink to help them sleep after the shifts; one had even been recommended by his doctor to have the “odd nip of brandy” to help “send him off.”

### WHAT DO YOU EAT ON NIGHTS?

“I rarely eat at home when I’m on nights. I get by on cigarettes, tea and toast. I can’t be arsed to eat.”

“I might bring something in, but most of the time I eat crap when I can get it.”

“It’s carbs and grease on night shifts. Kebab shops are the only things that are open.”

“We do eat shit though... pizzas, fish and chips, kebabs. That’s all that’s open. We probably end up drinking more too. Helps you sleep in the days. Of course it affects your health. It buggers up your sleep pattern completely.”

“I do not sleep well. I drink Red Bull and coffee all the time, day and night... I take food from Tesco’s, sandwiches or something from Chinatown. It’s expensive. I never can eat healthy food, it’s impossible with this job.”

Many of the medical conditions affecting night workers have long been attributed to their unhealthy lifestyle choices. However, recent research in the United States indicates that the risks associated with the disrupted sleep patterns remain, irrespective of lifestyle. In a laboratory experiment subjects whose sleep patterns were disturbed produced less leptin, a hormone that signals the body to stop eating, and experienced increases in blood glucose and insulin. Levels of cortisol, a hormone released during periods of stress and linked a number of medical conditions, also increased dramatically.<sup>22</sup>

Only a few of the people we interviewed were aware of the health implications of working regular night shifts and expressed concern for their health and how their work might affect their life expectancy. There is no data available on how life expectancy of night shift workers compares with the general population, but a number of those we spoke to reported that they were surprised how many of their former colleagues had been diagnosed with terminal conditions (often cancer) early into their retirements.

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Those over 50 years old complained that they were finding it harder to cope with night shifts than they had done when they were younger. They explained that sleep patterns were becoming increasingly erratic or they were finding it harder to sleep in the day. For example, Pete, a 62-year-old ambulance man said:

*I never had a problem with nights in the past. Until about five years ago. I used to be able to sleep for about five hours in the daytime, but that went down to four and now I'm lucky if I get three. You can manage one or two nights, but by the end of the fourth you really begin to feel it.*

Ali, a 53-year-old traffic warden who works nights in the London Borough of Westminster, echoed this, "I feel it, walking the whole time. It takes it out of you and it gets harder with age. But what can I do? I can't change my job. There are no other jobs available."

# Social lives and relationships

# 5

At around 1am the coffee shop I'm in is packed with people pouring out of nearby pubs and restaurants. They are loud, animated and smell of stale alcohol. An ambulance parks opposite and its crew join the queue. They are the only two people who are not shouting or swaying around. The couple behind the coffee counter quickly engage them in conversation, laughing and exchanging jovial banter. They, like the other night workers, are treated completely differently to the general public. This camaraderie between fellow night workers was evident across all the sectors; even the police and prostitutes exchanged friendly conversation about how their nights were going and how many hours they had left before they would head home.

Although the camaraderie between all of those working at night was clear, the strongest social ties were between co-workers. Many of the shift workers socialised together after work, as one of the nightclub promoters explained, "It's the best part of the job. I love it at night. There're great after work parties for staff." As with many who work during the day, this time was an important mechanism in winding down after the shift and coping with the stress of the job. As one of the ambulance staff reflected, "There's a good social life in the service. We've been surfing and there's a drinking culture. Everyone has a dark sense of humour. I suppose it's the way we cope."

The close social ties at work and the camaraderie between fellow night workers was seen as the good side of working nights. However, far more people were quick to identify how night work damaged social lives. One of the rickshaw drivers gloomily explained, "I don't make friends. Other people do activities at weekends, I cannot. My only friends are other rickshaw drivers. On Saturdays we buy beers and drink them in the garage when we finish, we drink from 5am until maybe 11am."

The lack of social lives affected many of the younger night workers' opportunities to form relationships. Franco, another rickshaw driver, explained, "The problem with working nights is that you're always alone. You can't go out with the girls. None of my friends have girlfriends." These sentiments were repeated time after time among the younger male interviewees.

Ali, the 52 year old traffic warden told me, "My wife gets lonely. I don't see her much. I go to work when she comes home. She goes to work when I am asleep." Mike, one of the underground workers, said much the same thing, "We're like ships that pass in the morning. I come in and she goes out. It's not healthy." Other people we spent time with were more explicit and complained how night working affected their sex lives, with one truck driver describing his stints of night shifts as "utterly sexless."

## The night shift camaraderie

At around 4am a cab driver pulls along side us at the lights on Shaftesbury Avenue. "Just had that Ross Kemp in the back," he says leaning out of the window. "He gave me his book as a tip! Looks like nobody's buying them." We all chuckle as the lights change and the cab veers off to the left.

## Limited social lives

Mike is head of security at a large London nightclub. "I've been in this game for 10 years. I like it as I can live during the day. I can get to the shops, the bank and everything. I can get by on five hours sleep ... I'd say 80% of door staff have no social life. We get home, see the kids and then crash for a few hours. That's our world. It's different to everyone else's."

## 5.1 The effect on family life

Whether night work was a positive or negative influence on family life was a common topic of conversation on many of the night shifts we participated in. For a large number of night workers, the fact that their working hours mirrored their partners' made it easier to share childcare. For example, Keith, a police constable with two children, said that when he's working night shifts he can get home in time to do the school run before he goes to bed. Terry, an engineer on the underground, thought the same: "One of the pros of the night is that I see more of my family than in normal life. My partner is a teacher and so we have much more flexibility in childcare. I usually get home, have something to eat and take the kids to school. I then come back and crash."

This was not the case for everyone. For some, night work made organising child care far harder. Bill works for London Underground and has two children aged six and ten: "The childcare costs a fucking fortune on nights: eleven grand last year. My missus works early and so we need a nanny in the morning because I can't get back by 7am. Some people say nights makes child care easier, but it doesn't." For lone parents the situation is even harder; research by the Day Care Trust highlights the major gaps that exist in childcare provision for shift workers, which can exclude single parents from employment that involves evening or night work.<sup>23</sup>

While the debate over night working assisting with the logistical aspects of family life will no doubt continue, there was much more of a consensus that working at night was detrimental to the quality of the time and the energy they had when they were spending time with their families and children. As Pete, the paramedic in his 60s, said, "I felt like I was missing so much of the kids growing up due to the job. You're never there during the day; even if you're doing nights you're trying to get over the last one, or prepare for the next. With shift work time goes so quickly and you're always out of sync with everyone else."

Other complained that the lack of sleep and general fatigue made them irritable. People described channelling what energy they had on the children, at the expense, they thought, of their relationships. Evidence from the US suggests that divorce rates are higher among shift workers.<sup>24</sup>

### The lone parent

Kim is a 32-year-old single mother. She has a 12-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old adopted son. She used to work as a carer, mainly working night shifts in a residential home for the elderly. "Nights are impossible with children. How can you organise childcare?" She had been offered morning shifts, but this too was impossible for her. "How many places can you take a toddler to at 5 in the morning if you need to be at work at 6 o'clock? Nowhere will take them." Kim is now unemployed.

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# Management and support

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Working at night brings with it a degree of freedom that does not always exist in the comparative role during the day shift. During the night we spent with workers fitting out a high street chain shop, both the shop fitters agreed that one of the best things about working at night was the absence of authority. All their managers worked during the day, leaving them to complete the job how they wanted to. As one of them said, “There are no governors about.” In many cases the night workers were in charge of the space or institution in which they worked, irrespective of their place in the organisational hierarchy.

While people valued the freedom to get on with jobs without close supervision or excessive management, they also complained that they were not adequately supported. One of the most frequent complaints heard from the night shift workers were that their needs were not sufficiently understood or taken into account by their managers or their colleagues working in the day time, as shown when the shop fitters moaned, “The office doesn’t think about it. They call us at 9am when we’re trying to get some kip, or book us into some hotel in the middle of town, so noisy you can’t sleep.” While such oversights are undoubtedly annoying, there were other ways in which the night workers were clearly lacking the support structures and facilities required to ensure they were working safely. Much of the unhealthy eating was happening because of the unavailability of other alternatives; for example nearly all the police canteens in London are closed at night. The ambulance crew we followed worked from 6.30pm to 6am without any substantial break; the three cups of tea we had over this period were only obtained by essentially ‘chatting up’ the nursing staff in the hospitals where we dropped off our patients.

As a recent Home Office report rightly noted, from the workers’ perspectives “there is no such thing as a good shift system”<sup>25</sup>, i.e. there will never be a single approach to night shift work that will suit everyone. Nevertheless, changing shift patterns are among the most stressful aspects of night work. As one of the ambulance drivers commented:

*I do 12-hour shifts and don’t have a life outside work. I just can’t do stuff in the day. I’m all dazed. It’s not safe, I don’t feel safe to drive or treat a patient at 4am. On an eight-hour shift I could cope. These 12-hour shifts, I can’t do them. They [the new 12 hour shift pattern] were introduced here in January. Management love it. We only have one change over. For us eight hours [shifts] were much better.*

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A change in shift patterns caused similar consternation with the police team we followed. Their eight-week rotation, which included a Monday-to-Friday night shift, had changed to a four-week pattern where they do a Friday and Saturday night, from 10pm to 6am. “The chief inspector says that we can do the two nights, have a couple of hours sleep on the Sunday and have the rest of the day with our families. Most people end up sleeping during their rest day. It’s down to resources... it’s only really busy on Friday and Saturday nights. They didn’t want to pay for us to work the whole week of nights, when it’s quiet. I preferred the old shifts. Your body can’t get used to just doing two nights.”

Shift patterns affect the biological clock, sleep and social lives and shift work can lead or contribute a range of medical conditions and illnesses. The way the shifts are organised has to accommodate the types of jobs, but understanding the needs and views of those working shifts must be an important part of the design of shift systems. This research has shown that in many cases this is not occurring.

# Conclusions and recommendations

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# 7

Night shift work is an important part of the modern economy. As we move ever closer to a 24 hour society, the number of people working at night will continue to increase in the foreseeable future – especially within the service sector.

However, little attention has been paid to those working at night in terms of who they are and whether their needs differ from the daytime workforce. During the course of this study we spent time with over 50 night workers – following and observing them as they worked their shifts, asking questions and listening to their stories and experiences. This exploratory ethnographic research revealed a vulnerable workforce, which is poorly supported and whose members are – for the most part – unaware of the risks they face on a nightly basis.

This research has shown how night workers are three times more likely to have an industrial accident and twice as likely to have a car accident on the way home, compared with other workers. There is a growing body of medical research highlighting the serious health implications associated with working at night, including higher risks of developing breast and other forms of cancer. This research has shown that many of the medical risks are being amplified by the unhealthy lifestyle choices being made – or forced upon – night workers.

Our recommendations fall into three areas:

## **Improved legislation**

Night workers are offered additional legal protection under the European Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) and the UK's Working Times Regulations (Statutory Instrument 1998 no. 1833). The legislation classifies night workers as those who regularly work at least three hours between 11.00pm and 6.00am and restricts their shifts to an average of eight hours in each 24-hour period. However, the major problem with this is that it is averaged over a 17 week period. Therefore, as we found during this study, many people work night shifts of up to 12 or 13 hours at any one time. Accidents and other dangers occur when people are tired and with hour being averaged out over such a long period, there is nothing to stop people working a series of long shifts. We recommend that the legislation should be changed to limit night shifts to a maximum of eight hours – with clear guidelines for overtime.

## Raising awareness

Legislation is an infamously blunt instrument for effecting change. While in this case reform to the statute books at an EU and national level is required, this is not a complete solution. During the course of this research it became evident that most night workers are unaware of the risks associated with their shift patterns. There is a growing evidence base associated with these risks and the range of practical actions people can take to avoid them. However, little of this is available in accessible formats and virtually nothing is being circulated to workers themselves. Nobody we spent time with was aware of any information or guidance about working safely at night.

Employers have a general duty of care responsibility for their workforce. There is a clear need for raising awareness of the risks of night working, among workers and those responsible for managing their shift patterns and working environments. At present they are doing a poor job of informing their night force of the risks associated with working at night. The government, Health and Safety Executive, the trade unions and employers should all be doing more to publicise the risks associated with night shifts.\* With the majority of night workers in the UK being employed in the public sector, the government in particular needs to pay more attention to the risks employees are being exposed to. In 2008 the Danish government began paying compensation payments to women in professions such as nursing who developed breast cancer after working regular night shifts. As one commentator put it, night working has the potential to be the next asbestos, raising the possibilities of widespread legal action and large compensation payouts.<sup>26</sup>

There are a large number of very practical things which night workers should be aware of which could help reduce the risks of health problems and accidents as well as improving their performance and wellbeing in the workplace. As part of this study, we collated advice, strategies and people's tips for safely working at night. These came from the individual experiences of the night workers themselves as well as the secondary literature and clinical research and are presented in the next section. The information about managing safer night shifts should be made far more accessible and publicised to employers as well as employees. We recommend that the Health and Safety Executive or a major trade union support the development of an illustrated and accessible website, with complementary leaflet, which brings together information, advice and guidance for night workers and their employers so that night shifts can be better managed and the dangers and risks associated with working at night can be better mitigated.

### Notes

\*The UK Health and Safety Executive has started its own investigation into the links between night work and breast cancer, but this is not due to report until later in 2011 and will focus only on the links between night work and cancer, not any of the other numerous risks.

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### **Better evidence base**

Although nearly one and half million people regularly work at night in the UK, surprisingly little is known about them. The data gathered about the night workforce is limited and therefore it is difficult to provide quantitative evidence about effects of night working. The research that is available is largely clinical and focuses on the physical and physiological effects of sleeplessness and fatigue associated with night work. Far less is known about how night work and people's psychological needs. The Young Foundation's research in Sinking and Swimming looked in detail at material and psychological need in Britain.<sup>27</sup> Many of the difficulties associated with night work – fatigue, pressure on relationships, difficulty in organising social lives etc – are likely to have a negative impact of people's psychological wellbeing and mental health. There is very little research looking at this and as the number of night workers continue to grow, this is likely to become a more pressing need.

### **The voluntary and community sector at night**

This research was funded by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG), whose primary mandate is to fund the voluntary and community sector. Unsurprisingly, there are no voluntary sector organisations explicitly providing services for night workers. As we have seen, night workers are not a homogenous group or a geographically concentrated community and it would be hard to envisage what generic services could usefully be provided. Nevertheless, the voluntary and community sector plays an important role in the night time economy, primarily by meeting the needs of people at night. Organisations that reach out to the homeless, prostitutes, problem drug and alcohol users, those with mental health problems, etc. are critical to ensuring that vulnerable people are supported and needs are able to be met around the clock.

The voluntary sector can also play an important role in meeting the needs of night workers through awareness raising and lobbying. For example, as part of its Living Wage Campaign, The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) changed the working conditions of the agency-employed cleaners who worked in the HSBC Headquarters in Canary Wharf, including raising pay, increasing holiday rights and cutting hours worked at night. This case, where the voluntary sector worked with trade unions to improve the working conditions of a specific group of night workers, could provide the basis for a much broader campaign to improve the conditions of those working at night.

# Advice and tips for night workers

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# 8

As part of this study, we wanted to collate advice, strategies and people's tips for safely working at night. These came from the individual experiences of the night workers themselves as well as the secondary literature and clinical research. As we have recommended above, there is a clear need for this information to be collated in a single place and made readily accessible for the night workers, those who manage them and the organisations and companies they work for.

The tips and strategies include:

## Getting enough sleep

Clearly, the biggest problem for people who work night shifts is managing one's sleep. Managing your normal sleep is important in preparing for nightshifts.

There are a number of steps one can take to get a better night's (or day's) sleep:

- Having a bedtime ritual that you follow before going to sleep. This could involve having a hot bath, avoiding stressful or stimulating activity directly before bed.
- Lower the temperature of the room you are sleeping in – people sleep better in cooler environments
- Try not to let your mind dwell on the upcoming shift or other stressful situations. Try to concentrate on innocuous relaxing activities such as walking on a beach/going to the park etc.
- If you can't sleep, get up and do something in another room to distract yourself. It doesn't help lying in bed worrying that you can't sleep.
- When sleeping in the day:
  - Turn off mobile phones, disconnect landlines, consider putting up a notice at your door that you do not want to be disturbed
  - Wear ear plugs and eye shades
  - Use thick, light blocking curtains – these will also reduce other noises
  - Ask family and friends at home to make sure it is a peaceful place during the day
- Avoid alcohol before going to bed and don't drink caffeine for up to four hours before going to bed
- Drink less fluid before going to bed to avoid trips to the toilet
- Eat a small meal before going to bed to prevent hunger, but avoid heavy meals which are hard to digest
- Avoid nicotine before going to bed; it is a stimulant
- Regular exercise during the day helps sleep patterns

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### **Get plenty of sleep before your first shift**

If you work a rotating shift pattern, it is important to get plenty of sleep before your first shift. If you don't, by the time you finish you will have been awake for more than 24 hours. Try to have a long lie-in in the morning. Try staying up later the night before to adjust. Have a sleep in the afternoon, so that you are well rested before you start.

### **Napping during your shift**

Having a short nap during the shift – where possible – increases alertness and will have positive effects on concentration levels and the speed of your reflexes. These naps can be as short as 20-40 minutes. They should be no longer than 45 minutes.

### **Don't neglect your relationships.**

The research showed night working can affect personal relationships and people who regularly work night shifts miss out on family activities, spending quality time with children, spouses etc, and seeing friends. It is important to schedule time with loved ones and maintain family relationships, social lives and links to the community. Sleep loss makes one irritable, anxious and stressed. Social support is essential in preventing this leading to more serious mental health problems.

### **Let your GP know you work night shifts**

As we have seen, there is growing evidence of the health risks associated with working at night. It is a sensible precaution to let your doctor know that you work regular night shifts and might, therefore, be at more risk to certain conditions and diseases. Women who have worked night shifts for a long period may want to consider requesting a mammogram screening – as there is the most evidence associating breast cancer with night work.

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### **Pay particular attention to your journey home**

Night shift workers are more likely to have an accident on their journey home.

Ways to minimise risks include:

- Consider sharing lifts home – travelling with others can reduce the likelihood of falling asleep at the wheel, especially if other passengers are aware of the risks and can look out for the driver becoming drowsy.
- Have a nap if you are feeling sleepy. Make sure you park in a well-lit area and ensure that your doors are locked.
- Consider using public transport, although this can be more difficult at night.

### **Stay vigilant when you are most vulnerable**

The body is most vulnerable between 3am and 6am. These times are when night workers are most likely to want to sleep, be less alert and have difficulty concentrating. It is important to maintain alertness and to be especially vigilant during these times.

### **Keep the lights on during your shift**

Try to maximise your exposure to light during the nightshift. Bright light has an alerting affect on the brain and improves performance.

### **Eat and drink properly**

It is easy for night workers to miss proper meals and eat unhealthily. This can contribute to many of the health problems discussed earlier, as well as reducing performance and concentration. Working at night affects your appetite because of circadian patterns. Canteen facilities and many food shops are not open during the night and people therefore skip meals or eat unhealthy food.

Eat a full meal before coming on shift, have 'lunch' half way through the shift and have a light meal when you get home, before going to bed. Bring in your own food if facilities are not available at night.

### **Reduce your caffeine intake**

Most night workers use caffeine as a stimulant to help them stay awake. However, caffeine has side effects – including gastrointestinal problems and muscle shakes. It can also make it difficult to sleep when you get home. If you do use caffeine to stay alert, it is best to take it in small quantities.

## THE CAFFEINE CONTENT OF COMMON DRINKS AND FOODS

Drink/food	Caffeine content (mg)
Ave cup of instant coffee (200 ml)	75
Ave cup of brewed coffee (200 ml)	100-250
Ave cup of tea (200 ml)	50
Herbal tea	0
Decaffeinated tea or coffee	3-5
Hot chocolate	5-7
Coca-Cola (330 ml can)	32
Diet Coke (330 ml can)	42
Red Bull (250 ml can)	80
Bar of dark chocolate (50g)	Up to 50
Bar of milk chocolate (50g)	Up to 25
Pro plus caffeine tablets	50 mg per tablet
Anadin Extra	45 mg per tablet

### Be extra vigilant if operating heavy machinery or safety equipment

If you have to use heavy equipment or you are responsible for operating or monitoring safety equipment, pay particular attention to signs of fatigue – yawning, repeated blinking, tiredness etc. To ignore these signs will be putting yourself and others at risk.

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