

Operation Safer Streets – reducing incidents of crime and harm within the night-time economy (NTE)

A problem-oriented policing initiative designed to reduce crime and violence against women and girls (VAWG) offences within Manchester's night-time economy (NTE) through hot spots policing, safeguarding and partnership working.

First published
19 August 2026

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Assault and violent crime Violence against women and girls Rape and serious sexual offences
Organisation	Greater Manchester Police
Contact	Lisa Quinn
Email address	lisa.quinn@gmp.police.uk
Region	North West
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	November 2025
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Communities General public Women Workforce

Aim

The aims of Operation Safer Streets are to:

- prevent incidents of crime and harm within Manchester city centre's night-time economy (NTE)
- ensure women and girls feel safe in the NTE
- deter theft, harassment, violence, and vulnerability associated with alcohol and drug use
- identify and safeguard vulnerable individuals within the NTE
- encourage partnership working with NTE stakeholders

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Operation Safer Streets are to:

- reduce the number of theft from person offences and acquisitive crime
- reduce crime harm using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI)
- increase awareness of support services and safe-space provision
- improve the confidence of women and girls who use Manchester's night-time economy
- improve partnership engagement with venues and licensed premises
- improve reporting and intelligence relating to violence against women and girls (VAWG) incidents

Description

Manchester city centre hosts one of the largest night-time economies in the UK. It attracts more than 37 million visitors annually and over 150,000 visitors on busy weekends. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) conducted a review that identified concerns relating to:

- VAWG
- theft from person offences
- alcohol and drug-related vulnerability
- crime concentrated within busy nightlife locations

GMP used a problem-oriented policing approach to analyse:

- crime data
- hot spots
- community survey findings
- partnership intelligence
- crime harm data

70% of women who responded to community surveys reported feeling unsafe in Manchester during the evening, rising to 82% among women aged under 24 years. Three-quarters of women reported experiencing harassment or abuse, while only around 20% reported incidents to the police or other agencies.

Environmental visual audits, hotspot analysis, routine activity theory and the CCHI were used to understand the underlying causes of offending. The assessment identified a recurring combination of motivated offenders, vulnerable victims and insufficient guardianship within busy night-time economy settings.

Operation Safer Streets is led by GMP in partnership with:

- Manchester City Council
- licensing teams
- pub and club networks
- venue operators
- St John Ambulance

Initial activity focused on a singular street before expanding to a wider area following further hot spot analysis. Dedicated patrol teams, made up of one sergeant and seven police constables, were deployed every Friday and Saturday between 8pm and 4am. Uniformed and plain-clothes officers focused on identified hot spot locations, proactively identifying vulnerability, preventing crime and addressing predatory behaviour. Patrols concentrated on safeguarding vulnerable individuals, increasing visibility, and disrupting offenders operating within the night-time economy.

Operation Safer Streets focuses on promoting the message that women should not have to change their behaviour because of fear of harassment or intimidation. Officers work proactively to identify vulnerable individuals, facilitate safer travel arrangements and provide reassurance in public spaces. Crime prevention measures of the operation include the distribution of:

- drink-spiking test kits
- protective drink covers
- personal alarms
- purse chains
- targeted crime prevention advice

Partnership activity has included licensing visits, venue engagement, promotion of the Women's Night-Time Safety Charter, and intelligence sharing and reviews of safety standards across licensed premises.

Operation Safer Streets has been implemented using existing policing and partnership resources and has become an established part of Manchester's NTE policing model. It is supported through regular hot spot reviews, partnership meetings and ongoing monitoring of crime and harm trends.

Overall impact

Operation Safer Streets has delivered measurable reductions in crime and harm across Manchester city centre's night-time economy (NTE). Following implementation on the street of interest, there was a:

- 17% reduction in crime
- 21% reduction in crime harm
- 35% reduction in theft from person offences

The wider area saw a 12% reduction in crime and a 26% reduction in theft offences. Collectively, the operation generated estimated financial savings of more than £1 million between October and December 2025.

Beyond recorded crime reductions, Operation Safer Streets has increased safeguarding opportunities, improved police visibility, strengthened partnership working and raised awareness of support services. Referrals to safe spaces has increased and vulnerable individuals have been identified and supported at an earlier stage.

Learning

Effective responses to VAWG and NTE crime requires a combination of prevention, safeguarding and enforcement. While visible patrols remain important, the most sustainable reductions in harm were achieved through:

- identifying vulnerability early
- increasing guardianship
- working closely with partners responsible for managing the night-time economy

The use of hot spot analysis, environmental assessments and crime harm data proved essential in targeting resources where they would have the greatest impact. The project reinforced the value of focusing on harm as well as crime counts, as reductions in vulnerability and victimisation can occur before wider reductions in crime become visible.

Strong partnership working has been vital to the success of the initiative. Collaboration with licensing teams, venue operators, St John Ambulance, Village Angels and Manchester City Council improved information sharing, enhanced safeguarding and created a more coordinated response to community concerns. Partners were able to address environmental risks, identify emerging issues and support vulnerable individuals more effectively than any agency working in isolation.

The operation also highlighted the continuing challenge of under-reporting, particularly in relation to harassment and VAWG-related incidents. Community engagement and visible policing have been important in building trust and encouraging reporting. However, further work remains necessary to ensure victims feel confident seeking support.

For organisations looking to implement similar initiatives, the force recommends:

- using data to identify hot spots
- focusing on vulnerability and harm rather than volume alone
- involving partners from the outset
- ensuring prevention activity is delivered alongside enforcement

Combining hot spot policing with safeguarding, community engagement and practical crime prevention measures can deliver significant and sustainable reductions in crime and harm.

Best available evidence

The [crime reduction toolkit](#) currently includes best available evidence on [hot spots policing](#).

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence. You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.