Night Safety

Women's Safety Audit

Westminster City Council



NTES

City of Westminster

Table of Contents

Purpose 03
Aims 03
Methodology 04
Context 06
Findings 09

- Usage 11
- Offer 14
- Transportation 18
- Public Infrastructure 23
- Crime and Safety 27
- Services and Welfare 31
- Enforcement 34
- Venue Governance 37
- Training 40
- Partnership Working 45



Purpose

Westminster City Council commissioned Night Time Economy Solutions to conduct a comprehensive assessment of women's safety during the evening and nighttime economy. This initiative involves a range of research methodologies to assess the current sentiments surrounding Westminster's nighttime scene, with a particular emphasis on understanding the experiences and perceptions of women in the area, whether they are visitors, employees, or residents.

The research includes surveys, stakeholder interviews, and street interviews tailored to engage with the visitors, employees, residents and stakeholders. Additionally, overnight audits were conducted, specifically focusing on women's safety and their overall experiences during nighttime hours. Through these consultations, a strategy report has been produced, presenting an analysis of the findings. This report provides actionable recommendations for all stakeholders involved, outlining strategies to enhance the safety and wellbeing of women in Westminster during nighttime activities.

Aims

01 Assess the safety of women and girls. Undertake a thorough evaluation of women and girls' safety within Westminster's nighttime activities, encompassing the viewpoints of visitors, employees, and residents.

02 Comprehend women's experiences. Acquire insights into the experiences and perspectives of women and girls in the area, particularly regarding their interactions within Westminster's nighttime scene.

03 Identify crucial safety concerns. Highlight specific safety issues confronted by women, including both physical locations and social interactions within Westminster's nighttime activities.

04 Offer targeted recommendations. Present practical recommendations and strategies for all relevant parties, delineating actionable steps to enhance the safety and wellbeing of women and girls in Westminster.

05 Promote ongoing enhancement. Establish a framework for continuous improvement, allowing for the tracking and assessment of implemented measures, focusing on long-term safety improvements for women and girls in the community.

Methodology

In this review, it was crucial to gather input from a broad spectrum of consumers, businesses, and stakeholders in Westminster. This inclusive approach was essential to ensure that we comprehensively grasped the nuances of women's safety and wellbeing during nighttime activities in the area. The valuable perspectives provided by these diverse sources were thoroughly considered in shaping our conclusions and formulating recommendations for this report.

Electronic Surveys

An invitation to participate in a consumer experience and business and employee survey was promoted via the Westminster City Council Twitter feed (33.5k followers), the Night Time Economy Solutions Twitter feed (1.6k followers), and the Night Time Economy Solutions Facebook page (121 followers).

There were 255 respondents to the experience survey; however, five respondents self-reported that they do not visit or live in or around Westminster in question one. Furthermore, 15 respondents stated that they do not go out in Westminster between the hours of 5pm and 6am, which prevented them from answering the majority of proceeding questions, with the exception of question 6 (Why not?) and question 19 (Is there anything that would make going out in Westminster between the hours of 5pm and 6am more appealing?). This resulted in the response pool being reduced to 235 for most questions and 250 for previously identified questions.

There were 96 respondents to the business survey; however, 39 respondents stated that they were not business owners, employees or volunteers of a business which operated in Westminster in the nighttime economy. These 39 respondents could not progress further in the survey, resulting in a reduced response pool of 57.

Street Interviews

Street interviews were conducted in Westminster on the 9th and 10th of March. During this period, two team members were actively engaged in collecting data through interviews with women. These interviews were pivotal in accumulating valuable insights to inform the subsequent analysis and recommendations.

There were 103 street interviews recorded. Two of these interviews had ‘N/A’ recorded against the three main questions and, as such, were not included in the analysis.

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the stakeholder insight survey, invitations to participate in phone interviews were sent to participants pinpointed by Westminster City Council. These interviews ran between 30–50 minutes.

11 phone interviews were conducted with representatives including, but not limited to, the chair of Licensing at Covent Garden Community Association, a representative for residents’ licensing concerns, the Director for Company Operations who represents the BID, the Chair of the Soho Ward Panel, and the Chief Licensing Officer for the Metropolitan Police.

Methodology

Overnight Audits

Three separate audits were carried out as part of the Westminster Night Safety initiative:

01 On Saturday, 18th March, the audit focused on the Westminster area.

02 On Wednesday, 22nd March, the attention remained on the Westminster area.

03 On Saturday, 20th May, the audit shifted its focus to the Victoria area

During these audits, which took place from 7pm until approximately 2am-3am, representatives from various key entities were engaged, including representatives from the MET Police, business owners, and door staff.

These audits involved an examination of various facets of the evening and nighttime economy, aiming to assess the impact of these factors on the experience of women's safety during nighttime activities.

Data Analysis

Throughout the research consultation phase of this report, requests for data were made to obtain additional information. These additional datasets were sought to gain a broader understanding of safety issues within Westminster during nighttime hours.

Documents that were consulted include:

- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021–2026 (bi-borough*)
- Safer Westminster Partnership Strategy 2020-2023*
- Westminster City Council Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2023-2028*
- Children and Young People Drugs Strategy 2023-2026 (bi-borough)*
- Cultural Strategy 2021-2025*
- City Plan 2019-2040*
- Our Plan for a Fairer Economy 2023-2026*
- West End group performance trends - November 2022
- Strategic Assessment 2023 recommendations

https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/bi-borough-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-strategy-2021-2026
https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/documents/s38933/4.a%20Safer%20Westminster%20Partnership%20Strategy%202020%20-%2023.pdf
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/anti-social-behaviour-strategy-2023-to-2028
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/children-and-young-people-drugs-strategy-2023-2026
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/our-cultural-strategy---2021-to-2025
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/city-plan-2019-2040

Context

The contribution of the UK nighttime economy

Over the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK evening and nighttime economy (NTE) made a sustained contribution to the UK's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2021 the NTE contributed 4.1% of GDP and £93.7bn to the UK economy. This was down from a peak of 5.1% GDP and £116.1bn in 2019 respectively. In 2022, within the broader sector, the nighttime cultural economy (NTCE) is estimated to have sustained 424,000 jobs and 35,500 firms.

The nighttime economy includes:

- Venues identified as pubs, nightclubs, restaurants, theatres, shops, cinemas, music and arts venues, transport hubs, hospitals, taxi ranks and taxis.
- Outside spaces include parks, squares, street food vendors, designated busking zones and any area accessible to the public, such as streets and markets.

Activities that fall within the NTE include eating, drinking, entertainment, shopping, viewing galleries, museums and spectator sports. However, they also include the workforce involved in running the NTE, such as hospitality, cleaning, retail, transport and medical.

Westminster is home to the largest evening and nighttime economy in the UK, generating £3 billion per annum towards the UK's economic output.

Within the UK NTE, some segments faced tough operating conditions even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2005 and 2015, 44% of UK nightclubs shut their doors, and 25% of Britain's pubs closed from 2001 to 2016.

Growth

Prior to the pandemic, the NTCE had been projected to continue growing, along with the wider nighttime industries, at 9% over the period 2020-2024; instead, the sector suffered job losses as venues were forced to close during the coronavirus crisis. Despite the challenges, the sector has shown resilience in making up pandemic losses and has significant growth potential.

Employment

In 2022, 27% of the UK workforce, around 8.7 million people, were nighttime workers, 700,000 fewer than in 2016. A nighttime worker is someone who usually works in the evening or the night. A large proportion of these jobs are low-paid and insecure, often on zero-hours contracts. Over 40% of nighttime workers in nighttime cultural and leisure activities are under 24 years old. The nighttime economy is heavily reliant on workers born outside of the UK: between 2012 and 2022, the number of non UK-born nighttime workers rose by 32.6% to 2 million (the UK-born nighttime workforce was 6.7 million in 2022).

Whilst employment in the nighttime economy fell during the pandemic, it has bounced back to almost pre-pandemic levels. However, the industry continues to suffer from staff shortages which may hinder growth.

https://ntia-ra-bfrs6jp7na-ew.a.run.app/report/NTECONREP
https://www.rtpi.org.uk/blog/2018/february/planning-day-and-night-why-the-night-time-economy-matters/
https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/oct/11/night-time-cultural-sector-hit-with-86000-job-losses-due-to-covid-19
https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/articles/thenighttimeeconomyuk/2022
https://www.ons.gov.uk/fileuri=/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/nighttimeworkersuk/2012to2022/ntelfs5.xlsx

Context

Fiscal Contribution

Overall, the NTCE contributes £10.6bn per annum to HM Treasury through the payment of VAT, from national insurance and taxation, corporation tax and duty on alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

Tourism

In 2022, there were 31.2 million visits to the UK, and over 50% of overseas visitors visited London as part of their trip. The quality and variety of the NTE, much of which is centred in Westminster, plays a vital role in tourism. Top activities for international visitors to London in 2019 included dining out (77%), visiting the pub (44%) and socialising (30%). 15% attended the theatre, opera or ballet. These data sets show how important the Westminster NTE is for the economy, locally and nationally. It is, therefore, vital that everyone feels safe and welcome when enjoying an evening out.

Women and girls' safety at night

Within the last few years, there has been an increased focus on the experience of women and girls at night in response to a rise in police-reported sexual offences and the continued prevalence of sexual harassment, as well as an upturn in cases of drink spiking.

Spiking

Reliable data on spiking is very patchy because there is no officially recorded offence of drink spiking or needle spiking. However, police-recorded incidents of drink spiking increased every year between 2016 and 2019, with 1,903 incidents that could be related to spiking reported in 2019. Police data shows that the majority of drink-spiking victims are females in their early twenties, but there are male and female victims of all ages. The police acknowledge that drink spiking is hugely underreported.

In a national YouGov poll in 2021, 11% of women and 6% of men said they had been spiked. A third of women and one in five men knew someone personally who had been spiked. Needle spiking appears to be rare compared to drink spiking, but a spate of reported incidents in the autumn of 2021 caused alarm and distress amongst young women. It seems to be a UK-specific phenomenon.

Crime rates and perceptions of safety in Westminster

In 2021-22 and 2022-23, police recorded crime increased in Westminster at a higher rate than across the Metropolitan Police service area as a whole. Theft accounted for the vast majority of the increase, mainly occurring in the West End. Sexual offences in Westminster fell by 5.9% between May 2022 and May 2023, and violence against the person fell by 2.1% over the same period. While these reductions are welcome, a 2021 survey found that two-thirds of women in the borough had endured a personal experience of street harassment, and 45% reported feeling unsafe at night.

Crime is especially prevalent in certain locations within Westminster, primarily the West End and St James' wards. In the year ending June 2023, 76% of all Metropolitan Police service recorded crime in the NTE in Westminster took place in these wards. There is strong and consistent evidence of an association between violence and the availability of alcohol. The level of violent incidents correlates with the density of alcohol outlets, which presents challenges to the authorities responsible for safety in the NTE. 59% of violent crime in Westminster is estimated to be alcohol-related.

In cases of sexual assault reported in Westminster, an estimated 39% of perpetrators are under the influence of alcohol (rising to 64% if the alleged perpetrator is a stranger to the victim), and 39% of victims are under the influence of alcohol.

Context

Drugs in the NTE

Drug misuse costs UK society around £20 billion a year, whilst the indirect cost to individuals and communities is incalculable. The nighttime economy brings challenges from recreational drug users, who are a large factor in driving local drug markets that impact local communities. As Westminster has the largest concentration of nighttime venues in the UK, it has high levels of associated drug-related crime, often committed by non-residents entering the borough to buy or sell drugs.

Initiatives to tackle violence against women and girls

Throughout the UK, there are many examples of organisations and cities aligning their practice and policy with specific issues pertaining to the safety of women and girls. Both the London Night Czar's office and National Pubwatch have a Women's Night Safety Charter, and the UK government has a Safety of Women at Night Fund.

Westminster City Council's 'Night Stars' help to ensure the safety of visitors on a night out, both on the street and in the Night Hub in Soho. They work in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and the London Ambulance Service.

Westminster City Council promotes awareness of sexual harassment through a publicity campaign, 'It's Her City Too'. The council is part of the three-borough violence against women and girls strategic partnership, alongside Hammersmith and Fulham Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/articles/thenighttimeeconomyuk/2022
https://www.ons.gov.uk/fileuri=/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/nighttimeworkersuk/2012to2022/ntelfs5.xlsx
https://ntia-ra-bfrs6jp7na-ew.a.run.app/report/NTECONREP
https://ntia-ra-bfrs6jp7na-ew.a.run.app/report/cga
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhaff/967/report.html
https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/cjuftnxdw5/YouGov%20-%20Drink%20Spiking.pdf https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhaff/967/report.html
https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/metropolitan.police.service/viz/MonthlyCrimeDataNewCats/Coversheet
https://consult.rbkc.gov.uk/communities/vawg-strategy-2021/results/aa_vawg_report_pdf.pdf
Metropolitan Police Service data - SafeStats
https://www.ias.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Off-trade-alcohol-availability-and-violence-Assessing-the-impact-of-on-trade-outlet-closures.pdf
Safer Westminster Partnership Strategic Assessment 2023



Findings

Following the analysis of research findings, each section of the report concludes with a recommendations chart. All recommendations are a result of the research, best practices, and our expert opinion, grouped in core themes for ease of implementation.

The recommendations should be interpreted as follows:

Importance

- High. This indicates that this is highly important and work needs to be started as soon as possible, preferably in the next 6 to 12 months.
- Medium. This indicates that this is of medium importance, and work needs to be started in the next 12 to 24 months.
- Low. This indicates that this is of low importance, it would be considered nice to do if the money, resources and time existed and work could be started in the next 24 months.

Timescales

- Ongoing. This is an activity that will need consistent and sustained work.
- Short. This indicates that work needs to be started as soon as possible, preferably in the next 6 to 12 months.
- Medium. This indicates that work needs to be started in the next 12 to 24 months.
- Long-term. This indicates that work could be started in the next 24 months.

Cost

- £—Low cost (Sub £50,000)
- ££—Medium cost (Sub £100,000)
- £££—Higher cost (£100,000 and above)

To achieve this, we recommend that a project plan is developed for all recommendations, with an owner for each action. Over the next 1 to 3 years, progress against each recommendation should be reviewed every month, with partners holding each other accountable for delivering each action.



Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
Westminster City Council should facilitate the creation and running of an evening and nighttime economy working group for the whole borough, consisting of representatives from the following: • Westminster City Council • Victoria BID • Victoria Westminster BID • Whitehall BID • Northbank BID • HOLBA • New West End Company BID • The MET Police • The Licensing Authority • London Ambulance Service • Voluntary sector (such as heritage and tourism groups), health and wellbeing groups (such as Street Pastors or another similar group, alcohol and drug charities, youth and young people, YMCA) • Transport for London (TfL) • Security providers • Licensing Link • Safer West End Business Partnership • Business and venues • Tourism and heritage facilities • Safer Business Network • Pubwatch The women and girls' safety and VAWG-related topics should feature as one of the essential agenda items at each ENTE working group.	High	Short	£

The working groups should achieve the following actions:
• Create internal project plans with KPIs and goalposts to assign tasks within the strategy implementation. These should be reviewed at working group meetings.
• Organise and chair an annual programme, including:
  ◦ Monthly working group meetings.
  ◦ Quarterly round-table events to gather feedback from businesses and community groups.
  ◦ Women and girls' safety and VAWG-related topics, which should feature as one of the essential agenda items at each ENTE working group meeting.
	High	Short	£

Usage

Survey Findings

57% of respondents to the user experience survey reported going into the nighttime economy in Westminster on a weekday (Sunday to Thursday between 5pm and 6am). 43% frequent the NTE on the weekend (Friday-Saturday between 5pm and 6am). Female respondents were more likely to go out in Westminster on a weekday evening (60%). Males and respondents who were non-binary, transgender or another gender were more likely to enjoy Westminster's NTE on the weekends (57% and 60%, respectively). Only the youngest age group (18-24) favoured going out on a weekend evening - all other age groups showed a preference for going out in Westminster's NTE on a weekday evening.

When asked what time they usually head home from a night out in Westminster, the most popular time to return home was 11pm (23%). The proportion of respondents leaving Westminster appears gradually to increase between the hours of 5pm and 10pm, increasing to the peak of 11pm. After midnight, there are relatively low proportions of people leaving Westminster, with some gender differences. 16% of females reported leaving slightly later than the peak, at 12am (compared to 5% of males), while there was a considerable proportion of males (but few females) reporting leaving Westminster at the much later times of 4am (14%) and 6am (11%).

Respondents tended to spend between 2-5 hours in Westminster's NTE, with females tending to stay slightly longer than males.

6% of those surveyed said they did not go out in Westminster between 5pm and 6am. Amongst these respondents, the top reasons given were safety concerns relating to violence against women and girls or drunk and rowdy behaviours (both on 33%). 27% said it was because they didn't like to go out at night.

Street Interviews

The feedback obtained through interviews highlights the perception that the atmosphere of Westminster's NTE undergoes a significant shift during the late-night to early-morning hours. One reoccurring observation made by stakeholders is the noticeable transformation in the customer demographic of Soho, a prominent contributor to Westminster's NTE. This transformation could be attributed to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and seems to be characterised by a shift towards a younger and 'rowdier' crowd, as indicated by one stakeholder.

The emerging consensus from the collected stakeholder responses is that Westminster's NTE is not particularly conducive to family outings or the elderly population.

Many stakeholders expressed the view that the activities and entertainment offerings in the area primarily cater to young adults and revolve around nightlife activities that may not be suitable for families or older individuals. This perception is reflected in the predominance of bars, nightclubs, and late-night venues in Soho and other parts of Westminster, which tend to draw a younger, alcohol-oriented clientele.

Usage

Audit Findings

During the course of the overnight audit, several noteworthy trends emerged, primarily focusing on the safety of women within the NTE. The observations revealed a distinctive demographic composition across various venues. In the early evening hours, an evident prevalence of women, couples, and families was observed, indicating a thriving and diverse patronage during this period. This prevalence suggests that early evening establishments may provide a comfortable and secure environment for women, potentially influenced by factors such as well-illuminated surroundings, visible security measures, and the presence of other families.

A relative scarcity of large groups of men, in contrast to the frequency of mixed groups consisting of both male and female patrons, was observed during the audit. This suggests that the NTE (during the observed periods) may not be the preferred destination for large male gatherings. The absence of such groups may imply a deliberate choice by this demographic to engage in other activities or visit different venues at this time.

The audit also delineated three distinct temporal zones within the NTE, each with unique characteristics and demographic compositions. In the early evening, the ambience was dominated by consumers enjoying food in various restaurants, ranging from chain establishments to independent ventures.

Moving into the mid-evening, a shift in activity was noted towards the theatre and open-air dining areas in Kingly Court. Consumers were also observed moving over to Camden Borough to attend Seven Dials Market. This suggests a preference for cultural and outdoor experiences during this time frame. By 8:30-9:00pm, families were noticeably absent, signifying a change in the demographic present. This shift may be attributed to families choosing to conclude their evening activities and return home, potentially due to routine and bedtime considerations.

As the night progressed, venues began to experience an uptick in activity around 9:00-9:30pm, marking the transition into the late-night phase. However, a decline in footfall became evident, signalling a tapering of day-time activities such as shopping, tourism, and dining. This could be attributed to closing times or a preference for earlier nights among the demographic present.

Usage Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The nighttime economy working group should work with licensing, local businesses, venues and the BIDs to collate a full list of all current nighttime economy venues and businesses operating in the area after 5pm. The offer of each business/ venue and its target demographic should be outlined in order to identify the spaces most commonly frequented by the following and opportunities for the growth of this offer: • Women and girls • Families • Young people • LGBTQIA+ communities • Workers within the borough • Global majority communities • People with disabilities	High	Short	£
We recommend that Westminster City Council continues to track evening and nighttime economy footfall data in a consistent and comprehensive manner with a breakdown of time indicators. We would recommend that this data is presented weekly at police briefing meetings and presented to the strategy group monthly.	Medium	Ongoing	£

Alongside footfall, annual e-surveys relating to evening and nighttime economy usage should be developed and circulated. This should include the following:
• Consumer usage trends, including:
  ◦ Days visited.
  ◦ Time of arrival.
  ◦ Time of departure.
  ◦ Dwelling time.
  ◦ Reason for visiting.
• Worker usage trends, including:
  ◦ Whether they come into the city before their shift.
  ◦ How long their shift typically lasts.
  ◦ Whether they go out into the evening and nighttime economy.
The findings of this should be presented alongside footfall data and inform any revisions required to strategy.
	Medium	Ongoing	£

Promote businesses and the region as a diverse, safe and appealing place to go out at night by: • Highlighting the variety of events that are put on. • Promoting safety features, training and policies (such as anti-drink spiking, Ask for Angela, Safe Spaces). • Using social media and visible in-house marketing to promote safety initiatives. • Showcasing the diversity and inclusion practices that are in operation to welcome people of all backgrounds. • Promoting partnership working within non-competitive businesses to include cross-pollination of activities.	High	Ongoing	£
Create e-marketing, physical marketing and signposting materials to give guidance to women and girls on how to identify and report a vulnerability. These should be promoted online alongside the Women's Night Safety campaign by Westminster City Council in addition to being displayed in physical spaces, such as transportation hubs and advertisement boards.	High	Short	£
A marketing campaign should be created for: • Potential perpetrators of crimes against women and girls to let them know the impact of committing a crime. • Women and female identifying individuals on personal safety and the importance of self-care and care of friends. • How venues and stakeholders can take action to ensure the safety of women and girls at night, such as taking part in Westminster City Council's Women's Night Safety Accreditation, implementing WAVE training or Ask for Angela.	High	Medium	£

Offer

Survey Findings

Amongst respondents to the user experience survey, the most popular places to visit in Westminster's NTE were restaurants (58%), pubs or bars (39%), cinema or theatre (37%), arts and/or music (34%) and coffee/dessert establishments (30%). 19% reported going late-night shopping, and 13% went to nightclubs.

Respondents stated that they found both the choice and quality of things to do and places to visit in Westminster's NTE good or very good (72% and 71%, respectively). Although still a relatively high proportion, males were less optimistic about these factors than females.

The lowest satisfaction was for safety in Westminster's NTE, with only 37% stating that they found safety to be good or very good, compared to 63% for vibrancy, 57% for accessibility, 62% for atmosphere and 50% for a welcoming and inclusive environment. Amongst respondents who self-identified as disabled, 43% said accessibility in Westminster was good or very good, while 39% thought accessibility was bad or very bad.

When asked what would make Westminster's NTE more appealing, increased police presence (45%) and improved safety (40%) were in the top three factors for female and male respondents. Males also chose later timetables for public transportation (35%). Increased cleanliness (29%) and safer public transportation (27%) received a high proportion of responses, especially from female respondents (35% each).

30% of female respondents wanted to see more activities with a no-alcohol focus, compared to 19% of males. Male respondents were much more in favour of having an increased number of activities with an alcohol focus than women (22% to 6%).

The lowest proportion of responses stated that nothing would make Westminster's NTE more appealing (8%), with a higher proportion of male respondents selecting this option (16%) compared to females (5%).

Respondents to the business survey were asked what they thought would increase footfall in Westminster's NTE. 69% felt that a later timetable for public transport would increase footfall and 66% identified safety factors. A greater variety of business sectors was felt to be the least likely factor to increase footfall (21%), consistent with the experience survey in which respondents appeared to be satisfied with the choice and quality of things to do and places to visit.

Street Interviews

The analysis of participant responses regarding nighttime activities in the area revealed a diverse range of perspectives. Ten participants contributed to the question (Q3d: 'Discuss your perception of the following attributes…diverse range of activities'), generating a total of 20 individual comments. The responses did not exhibit a strong thematic consistency, making it challenging to categorise them into distinct patterns.

A notable trend emerged regarding the perceived emphasis on alcohol within the NTE. Three separate comments underscored this perspective, highlighting a concern that the NTE places excessive focus on alcohol-related establishments. Additionally, one participant expressed that there may be an overabundance of alcohol licences in the area, potentially contributing to this perception.

Offer

However, positive feedback also emerged from participants. Some respondents referenced the presence of ‘nice theatres’ and commended the existence of community-oriented or local pubs. This suggests that there are appreciated elements within the NTE that contribute positively to the area's nighttime offerings. Furthermore, participants acknowledged a broad spectrum of leisure and hospitality options, indicating a diverse array of choices for patrons.

Early in the evening, there was an observed vibrancy and diversity of activities, creating a dynamic and lively atmosphere. However, contrasting comments indicated that this diversity waned as the night progressed, suggesting a potential shift in the demographic or type of activities occurring during later hours.

Opinions regarding the limited range of activities were also expressed, emphasising that most of the activity is limited to restaurants and pubs while another comment noted that all the bars are too similar. This insight suggests a need for diversification in the types of offerings available, potentially introducing a wider array of nighttime experiences to cater for a broader audience.

While concerns about inclusivity for families and the elderly, as well as an emphasis on alcohol-related activities, were prominent, positive feedback highlighted the presence of valued amenities such as theatres and community-oriented pubs. The temporal shift in the diversity of activities and the call for a broader range of offerings signal potential avenues for improvement and innovation within the nighttime economy.

Audit Findings

A diverse range of dining options was observed, including independent restaurants and well-known national brands, catering for a broad spectrum of preferences and budgets. However, it was noted that Soho tended to have a higher price range, potentially affecting accessibility for certain demographics.

One significant observation was the prevalence of alcohol and cocktail-focused venues. While this contributes to the lively atmosphere of the West End, it may also raise concerns about safety. The limited availability of non-alcoholic options could potentially leave individuals who choose not to consume alcohol with fewer choices.

Furthermore, our audit revealed a relative lack of diverse activities apart from theatres. This could impact the overall appeal of the area and the variety of experiences available to visitors. A wider range of activities could contribute to a more balanced and inclusive nighttime environment.

Distinct identities were noted in different parts of Westminster, with Chinatown, Carnaby Street, and Covent Garden standing out for their unique character and potential for creating memorable moments. However, our visit to Covent Garden venues revealed a quieter atmosphere, while Carnaby Street venues seemed to close early. This may have implications for the availability of nighttime activities and could affect the overall experience of visitors and feelings of safety due to lower footfall.

Late-night takeaways were observed to be operational, and they appeared to be well-managed. However, it was uncertain whether they had the capacity to handle peak demand. Access to food options late

Offer

at night can contribute to a more secure and comfortable nighttime experience.

The audits portray a vibrant yet somewhat limited nighttime landscape. The dominance of alcohol-focused venues and the absence of non-alcoholic offerings warrant consideration for creating a balanced and inclusive environment for all visitors. Additionally, ensuring a diverse range of activities and cultural offerings open later into the evening could contribute to a more dynamic and safer nighttime experience. Addressing these findings can enhance the safety and inclusivity of the West End for all its patrons.

There appears to be a discrepancy between the audit observations on the choice/variety of Westminster's offer, particularly later in the evening, and the high level of satisfaction with the choice on offer shown in the user survey. However, safety and drunken behaviour are top concerns (which put some potential visitors off using the NTE), alongside survey data suggesting that nearly a third of female visitors would like more non-alcohol focused activities. This suggests there is potential to grow the non-alcohol related NTE. That said, the survey results demonstrate that visitors are finding a wide variety of non-alcohol related activities, as only one of the top five most popular activities was specifically alcohol oriented.



Offer Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The nighttime economy working group should work with the BIDs to map the key nighttime economy areas across the borough. These maps can evaluate the culture and offer, identify gaps, and ensure that the offer is balanced. Results from Westminster's After Dark initiative should be used to help inform this. An emphasis should also be put on the availability of diverse nighttime activities, including non-alcohol led options, and should be updated annually. This map should also facilitate the identification and creation of defined nighttime economy zones and hubs within the area, where resources and inward investment should be directed. These areas should be promoted using place-specific marketing strategies to invite investment and advertise business opportunities to existing businesses. A distinct vision for each area should be developed to ensure that each area's offer is unique.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should work with local businesses, venues and the BIDs to encourage development and diversification of Westminster's evening and nighttime economy to provide an offer that reflects the needs and usage of Westminster population and communities, including; • Women and girls • Families • Young people • LGBTQIA+ communities • Workers within the borough • Global majority communities • People with disabilities The results from the Westminster After Dark initiative should be used to help inform this.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group and nighttime economy businesses/venues should work with local female artists and promoters to host regular female-only club nights and other evening nighttime economy events.	High	Short	£
Westminster City Council should work with the BIDs to devise a year-round events calendar for the borough that includes: • Restaurant weeks • Pop up art galleries • Music events in parks showcasing local talent • Cultural activities, such as an illumination festival or night markets. This may encourage more footfall of families, women and girls to the area, creating a safer atmosphere.	Medium	Medium	££
Following the results of the Westminster After Dark engagement piece, a marketing and PR plan should be created for investors, local businesses, locals users, and tourists. This can help to support growth and keep those in the area from travelling to neighbouring evening and nighttime economies. Recommendations for engagement include: • Investors. Clear investment brochure online detailing the opportunities available in Westminster, including properties and support such as rent and rates reductions and grants. Westminster City Council and Westminster's BIDs attend and have a stand at Mipim with clear investment opportunities https://www.mipim.com/en-gb.html. Westminster City Council should also look to commission a retail and leisure gap analysis to identify opportunities for investors. • Local businesses. Clear investment brochure online detailing the opportunities available in the area, including properties and support such as rent and rates reductions and grants. Monthly email from the council detailing the opportunities for economic growth. Westminster City Council and Westminster's BID should also support local businesses to take advantage of tourism opportunities. • Locals users and tourists. Westminster City Council and Westminster's BIDs should make use of their websites, social media, newsletters, and loyalty cards, by creating a business nighttime economic growth marketing strategy and activation plan. Stakeholders should also engage in the above practices.	Medium	Medium	£

Transportation

Survey Findings

The most popular mode of transport for visitors to get into Westminster between the hours of 5pm and 6am was the bus (56%). This was followed by walking (47%), tube (36%) and taxi (34%). Female responses were typical of the overall response, but males were more likely to get a taxi (46%), take the bus (41%) or drive (35%). Most respondents to the business survey reported travelling to work by tube (63%). Walking was the second most popular transport mode for workers (30%), followed by bus (25%).

When asked about perceptions of safety for women and girls on various modes of transport between 5pm and 6am, the highest proportion of visitor respondents (73%) perceived travelling by car to be the safest transport option. This was followed by taxi (61%). Cycling and walking were considered the least safe transport options for women and girls (36% and 38% respectively). Public transport was perceived to be somewhat safer (43% tube, 46% bus). There was a notable disparity between male and female perceptions of women and girls in transportation. Across all modes of transport, male respondents perceived a lower level of safety for women and girls than that perceived by female respondents.

Amongst business respondents, travelling by car and taxi were considered the safest options for women and girls in the NTE (78% and 70% respectively). Walking was perceived to be safe by 43%, compared to 21% who thought it was unsafe. Views on the safety of scooters were fairly evenly split (36% unsafe to 32% safe).

In the street interviews, transport locations were identified as places where interviewees felt unsafe, including train stations, underpasses and walkways, and the underground in general, alongside specific locations such as Leicester Square tube platforms and Victoria Coach Station.

Stakeholder Interviews

A mixed perception of the transportation system in the area was evident. Comments were broadly categorised into positive and negative views, with a notable focus on pedicabs and public transport.

Positive feedback, accounting for a quarter of the comments given regarding transport, commended the presence of key transport infrastructure, specifically the night bus service, which plays a pivotal role in facilitating nighttime mobility. Participants also acknowledged alternative modes of transport, such as cycling and walking, highlighting their contribution to the accessibility and dispersion of people. Furthermore, there was recognition of good connectivity within various transport organisations. However, it was noted that there may be a disconnect with the British Transport Police, suggesting an area of potential improvement in coordination and safety.

However, most comments conveyed negative sentiments towards the transportation options in the area. A significant portion of these comments specifically addressed concerns related to pedicabs. Participants expressed apprehensions about their safety, noting that they are perceived as generally unsafe. Furthermore, there were comments that some pedicabs operate without proper licensing, raising questions about their regulation and compliance with safety standards. Additionally, concerns were raised about the noise levels associated with pedicabs, as well as allegations of involvement in illicit activities.

Public transport received a series of criticisms, including overcrowding, particularly during peak hours, which may contribute to a less comfortable experience for commuters. Safety concerns were also highlighted, particularly during nighttime travel, potentially influencing

Transportation

perceptions of safety for women. Furthermore, participants noted challenges related to insufficient signage, which could lead to confusion for residents, visitors, and tourists. Accessibility for disabled individuals was raised as an issue, indicating potential gaps in inclusive transportation options. Some comments also highlighted instances of predatory or poor behaviour on public transport, underlining the need for enhanced safety measures. In addition, unmanned stations or stops brought questions about the availability of support and assistance for commuters.

Cyclists were also a point of contention, with one comment noting a perceived lack of adherence to traffic rules, potentially endangering pedestrians. This raises a concern for overall road safety and underscores the importance of enforcing regulations for all road users.

Lastly, there was a comment referencing illegal minicabs, with the participant noting that there has been increased attention on this issue. This suggests that efforts are being made to address this concern, potentially reflecting an awareness of safety risks associated with unregulated transportation options.

The analysis of transport-related comments highlights a diverse range of perspectives. While positive feedback focused on key infrastructure and alternative transport options, concerns predominantly centred around pedicabs and various safety aspects of public transport. These findings can inform strategies to enhance transportation safety and accessibility in the area, ensuring that residents, visitors, and tourists have access to reliable and secure options.

Audit Findings

The transport hubs were notably well-lit and bustling with activity, indicating an appropriately maintained and secure environment. This is a positive sign for consumers utilising these facilities, as it creates an atmosphere of visibility and vigilance.

However, a concerning finding was the absence of clearly defined taxi ranks or designated pick-up points for Uber services. This deficiency poses a notable risk, particularly as consumers may inadvertently enter an unauthorised or unregulated vehicle. This situation could be especially hazardous for women, who may be more vulnerable in such scenarios.

Congestion in specific areas, including Greek Street, Wardour Street, and Old Compton Street, was observed, leading to overcrowding on pavements. This forced pedestrians onto the thoroughfare, creating a hazardous environment where pedestrians, cars, and pedicabs shared the same space. As the evening progressed, pedestrians who had consumed alcohol appeared to be less aware of traffic hazards, further heightening the risk of accidents.

Another notable issue was the variable quality of way-faring information. Some displays were observed to be unlit, potentially hindering effective navigation. More directional signage could greatly benefit visitors, offering clarity on their location and estimated travel times to nearby destinations. However, it is worth noting that good signage was identified in Carnaby Street, aiding visitors in understanding their location.

Men were observed to favour private modes of transport, while women were more inclined to choose public transport, even if they believed

Transportation

that private vehicles or taxis might be safer options. Nevertheless, women perceived public transport as a safer option for women and girls compared to the perception held by men. This nuanced insight suggests the need for tailored safety measures that take into account these gender-specific perspectives.

The audit also raised concerns about unregulated pedicabs, which were identified as a source of significant problems. The existing legislation may pose limitations on regulatory actions. Consequently, it is imperative for the council to explore avenues for addressing the issues raised and potentially reassessing legislative frameworks to ensure safety and compliance.

Adequate lighting, well-used transport hubs, and perceptions of safety on public transport are positive aspects. However, challenges related to traffic management, overcrowding, and unregulated transportation options like pedicabs require careful attention and potential policy adjustments. Addressing these findings will be instrumental in creating a safer and more secure environment for all individuals, especially women, within the area.



Transportation Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost

The nighttime economy working group should encourage, and work in partnership with TfL to conduct a review of public and private transport, across Westminster at night.
This could be done by an external consultant and should include:
• Different modes of transport such as trains, buses, taxis and private hire, including stops, stations and transportation hubs. This should assess:
  ◦ Regularity
  ◦ Availability and timings to ensure there is an offer covering the evening and nighttime economy
  ◦ Suitability
  ◦ Routes
  ◦ Cleanliness
  ◦ Safety
  ◦ CCTV
  ◦ Lighting
  ◦ Licences
  ◦ Usage
  ◦ Potential growth opportunities
  ◦ Pricing
  ◦ Providers
  ◦ Equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practices
  ◦ Vulnerability management processes
	Medium	Medium	££

Westminster City Council should work in partnership with TfL to review current procedures pertaining to transportation checks at night. This should include how often transport hubs are patrolled, the frequency of licence checks and working with partners to provide dedicated marshals responsible for managing the borough's bus and taxi provision.	High	Short	£
Westminster City Council should work in partnership with transport providers such as TfL and Network Rail to include additional transportation checks focused on women and girls' safety. These physical checks could include: • Provision of CCTV and dashcams inside the vehicles CCTV provision outside hubs • Locking features of the vehicles • Exits in and out of hubs • Lighting • Sightlines • Greenery and overgrowth • Drug dealing • County lines • Onwards travels out of the hub. Westminster City Council should review any issues being raised by the public through forums, websites, and social media concerning women and girls' safety on the borough's transportation modes.	High	Short	£
Westminster City Council and the nighttime economy working group should assess the suitability of their current cycling infrastructure at night and the feasibility of providing e-scooters, bikes and e-bikes in order to improve transportation in the area at night and offer a form of transport attractive to women and girls, young people and couples.	High	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should work with transportation representatives and the planning department to review and suggest locations that could be utilised for permanent nighttime economy taxis, Uber and private car pickup points. These locations should be positioned on the main street and will require the provision and implementation of CCTV, over lighting and signage and talking cameras would be a good addition. This review should consider how locations and provisions will impact women and girls' safety.	Medium	Medium	££

Transportation Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
Alongside WCC's pedicab campaign and the work of the Night Stars, information regarding the reporting structures and procedures for unlicensed taxis should be displayed in key TfL transportation hubs and the nighttime economy taxi ranks. This should include clear guidance on how to report instances of sexual harassment by taxi drivers against women and girls.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should collaborate with local female artists and VAWG groups/organisations to present bus stop galleries showcasing pieces of art and text dedicated to the safety of women in addition to female empowerment. Bus stops across the borough could be used.	Low	Long	££
The creation of allocated taxi ranks and Uber pick-up points, monitored by CCTV & ANPR enforcement cameras. Taxi wardens should be allocated over weekends and peak footfall times to eliminate challenges regarding illegal taxi operations.	Medium	Long	££
The nighttime economy working group should facilitate the delivery of vulnerability management training for all transportation staff across the district that can be taken at their convenience via online e-learning modules. Training should also be provided to operators pertaining to VAWG & harassment with a focus on understanding how to identify and report incidents. WCC could develop the already established online night safety training platform to achieve this.	High	Ongoing	£
Information should be sought from TfL regarding safety standards on public transport and this information should be made readily available for transportation operatives and passengers. Should this information not be provided, a borough-wide public and private transport safety accreditation scheme should be explored with TfL and transport providers including agreed safety standards set by the TfL and reviewed by the ENTE strategy group.	Medium	Ongoing	££
In addition to the transportation questions asked through Westminster After Dark consultations, the nighttime economy working group should work with TfL to ensure a transportation satisfaction survey is conducted every year between evening and nighttime economy reviews. Questions specific to women and girls' safety should be a core part of the review.	High	Ongoing	£
Westminster City Council should work with TfL and the MET Police to ensure that The Pedicabs (London) Bill takes a holistic approach to the new regulation of pedicabs operating in Westminster by: • Ensuring the consideration of women and girls' safety when setting standards for operators, drivers, and their vehicles to improve the safety of pedicabs, as well as introducing insurance requirements and ensuring vehicles are road worthy. • Restrict nighttime operations for pedicabs to curb potential misuse for illicit activities by requiring a private hire licence. • Increase law enforcement presence in targeted areas to monitor and deter misconduct involving pedicabs. • Establish designated parking zones for pedicabs to prevent traffic obstruction and enhance safety for pedestrians. • Set up a community reporting mechanism for misconduct reporting involving pedicabs to facilitate public feedback and safety concerns.	High	Long	££

Public Infrastructure

Survey Findings

When asked about satisfaction with public amenities in Westminster, parks and green spaces (60%), and bus stops (53%) were the only factors with which over 50% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied. Nearly 50% were satisfied with business/shop fronts. Public washrooms (29%) and seating (32%) had the lowest levels of satisfaction amongst all respondents, with an even lower level of satisfaction amongst females.

There were few gender differences in satisfaction with public infrastructure, with the exception of streetscaping, as 50% of females were satisfied compared to 30% of males.

When asked what would make them feel safer in Westminster between 5pm and 6am, 63% of user respondents stated that well-lit areas would make them feel safer. This increased to 70% amongst female respondents, compared to 43% for males. 61% of business respondents also said well-lit areas would make them feel safer when working/volunteering at night. Better lighting was also mentioned by many of the street interviewees.

Overall, public infrastructure tended to be cited less than other factors (e.g. safety and cleanliness factors) that would make Westminster's NTE more appealing.

Stakeholder Interviews

All 11 participants contributed to Question 3c ('Discuss your perception of the following attributes...welcoming public realm'), generating a total of 40 individual comments, which were broadly categorised into four main themes. The largest theme, encompassing nearly two-thirds of the comments, revolved around observations regarding the public realm. This included evaluations of the area's overall appearance and cleanliness, as well as concerns related to safety features like CCTV and street lighting.

5 participants noted that the streets were well-maintained and clean and that issues related to lighting were generally not a concern. Additionally, the public realm was generally viewed as welcoming, especially in tourist areas. However, it was acknowledged by one participant that achieving a consistently welcoming public realm was a challenge, suggesting that certain areas may require targeted improvements. Opposingly, others raised concerns about the cleanliness of the area, with four comments describing it as dirty. Lighting issues were also raised, with four comments noting that certain areas were perceived as dark.

Further concerns included narrow pavements with various obstructions, insufficient signage, and the need for additional CCTV coverage. One participant advocated for better-equipped security workers to be given enhanced capabilities to address lower level anti-social behaviour, indicating a potential strategy for improvement.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) emerged as a significant concern for participants, particularly related to public urination and the absence of adequate public toilet facilities. Four responses highlighted these issues, while three participants cited broader concerns about ASB in the area. Additional complaints included disturbances related to noise and incidents of public vomiting.

Only four participants provided feedback on inclusion and accessibility, yielding a total of eight comments. The responses varied in sentiment

Public Infrastructure

with both positive and negative perspectives. Negative comments predominantly centred on concerns about reduced accessibility due to crowded and narrow pavements. Participants expressed frustration about the challenges posed by outdoor dining with tables and chairs obstructing pedestrian paths, forcing people onto the streets. One comment also highlighted the absence of ramps for wheelchair users to navigate curbs, indicating a critical area for improvement. Additionally, a participant noted that existing rules enforced by the council were perceived as lacking, further underscoring the need for increased attention to accessibility. In contrast, the introduction of pedestrianised areas was recognised as a positive step towards enhancing accessibility in the area, reflecting a proactive approach to urban planning and design.

Audit Findings

Lighting was found to be inconsistent throughout the audits. In some areas lighting was notably poor, however, in other areas there were good examples of creative and dynamic lighting solutions. Regent Street was a good example, with the effective use of fixed downlighting and uplighting from buildings. Carnaby Street was well-lit, with different lighting styles giving a sense of place. Leicester Square and Soho were poorly lit in places. Other examples included Soho Square Gardens (unlit), Wardour Street (lighting on only one side) and many dark alleyways.

Inadequate street lighting was also found in the Victoria/Strand areas, where some unlit alleys were frequently used as shortcuts to the Embankment. This inconsistency in illumination poses a potential safety concern, especially for women who may feel vulnerable and less secure while navigating through poorly lit areas. Additionally, inadequately lit entrance streets and squares, like the Soho Hotel entrance and Leicester Square, may deter women from utilising these spaces during the night.

Unnecessary telephone boxes were found to be open, potentially obstructing views and providing hiding spots for individuals with malicious intent. This could compromise women's safety and necessitates a re-evaluation of the placement and necessity of such structures.

Issues related to sanitation and public facilities were also observed. Fly tipping and rubbish bags on the streets pose both sanitation and safety concerns. An absence of directional signage and distance markings indicating the way to key locations was noted. This could lead to uncertainty and potential discomfort for those navigating the area, possibly leading to a diminished sense of safety. Public maps with QR codes were observed to have been installed on walls but were often dimly lit or unlit; these could be made more visible.

The audits found that public toilets were closed in the evening. Portable urinals and portaloos had been deployed in certain places, but there was no obvious signage; furthermore, they were unlit and felt unsafe. Throughout the night, no one was seen using them. However, public urination – by males and females – was observed. This factor, coupled with unclear signage and placement, raises questions about their management and appropriateness. Understanding the operational schedules, signage, and locations of public toilets are all crucial for addressing potential safety concerns associated with their presence.

Public Infrastructure Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
A digital animation trail should be created, including mapping of street art and creative lighting in Westminster. This should connect hubs and areas across the borough, encouraging footfall into the areas. Each location should be signposted with a QR code, or online database to give more information about the installation, history, or artist.	Medium	Medium	££
Westminster City Council and local stakeholders should conduct a review of all current empty buildings, retail spaces, public grounds and open green spaces with a view to utilising these spaces during the hours of the evening and nighttime economy for organised and regulated events, to host regular pop ups and events with a specific focus on attracting women and girls or for female-led events, businesses and festivals.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should review all current street signage and wayfinding throughout the borough for those travelling by foot and bike. The group should ensure that all signage is: • Legible • Well positioned • Readable during evening and nighttime hours • Accessible Where possible, signage in the area should be linked in with hub animation to create connections between areas and highlight the unique selling point of each location.	Medium	Medium	££
Develop a guide to public and private realm considerations to be published on the Westminster City Council website. This will help stakeholders better consider the impact of any changes on aspects such as women and girls' safety, this should include ensuring that there are clear sightlines, good lighting, CCTV, an action plan for the management of spaces, including artworks, greenery and structured walkways to ensure that any new buildings engage with enhanced safety in the district at night.	Medium	Short	££
A guide for local businesses should be created to enable them to enhance planting, signposting, shutter artwork, and lighting in appropriate areas outside their premises at night to make the street frontage look more welcoming and safer for women and girls. This guide should be designed in conjunction with the public realm masterplan and the conservation area management plan is in place. Planning permission may be required in some cases.	Medium	Medium	£
The nighttime economy working group should develop a strategy for creative animation, street art and lighting projects in the area. This would encourage non-alcohol led footfall into the area, and would work towards tackling issues raised in the findings of the report most specifically regarding women and girls feeling unsafe in surroundings where lighting is poor.	High	Medium	££
Ensure all residents, consumers and businesses are aware of the Report It tool available on the Westminster City Council website and any additional reporting facilities and procedures pertaining to: • Lighting • CCTV • Graffiti • Ticketing machines • Wayfinding signs • Transport pick up points • Street furniture • Commercial trade waste • Overgrown greenery and foliage. When issues with any of the above are found or reported, Westminster City Council should work with partners to improve provisions and an acceptable time frame for repairs should be agreed by stakeholders.	Medium	Medium	£

Public Infrastructure Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
Westminster City Council and the nighttime economy working group should commit to performing a six-monthly audit of the areas, car parks, alleyways, cut-throughs and public green spaces at night, with a particular focus on assessing them for women and girls' safety.The audit should include a review of: • Ticketing machines • Lighting • Safety • Graffiti • Anti-social behaviour • Users and non-users with a focus on dissuading those with a street-based lifestyle from begging and or drinking/taking drugs in the area • Maintenance of bollards, fencing, street furniture and greenery • CCTV • Help points • Clear sightlines • Signage • Abandoned vehicles • Litter, drug paraphernalia, broken glass, and other hazardous materials • Public realm including bins • Provision and suitable use of disabled car parking spacesManagement and upkeep of spaces • Security presence • Accessible and suitable sizing dimensions of walkways, pavements, car parking spaces and other public realm access routes.	High	Ongoing	£
Westminster City Council should develop a usage and marketing strategy for public toilets across the area, especially at night. This should include: • Improving women's safety by reducing public urination incidents, which pose a safety risk, through targeted awareness campaigns and enforcement measures. This should include marketing of the 'Don't Pee Off Soho' campaign. • Improving signage for public toilets, to enhance visibility and accessibility. • Ensuring timely opening of public toilets according to the specified schedule on the council website. Add a reporting feature to the website where users can report toilets being closed or unavailable. • Implementing robust maintenance procedures for automatic and temporary toilets to ensure continuous functionality. • Strengthening security measures around public toilets to enhance safety for users, especially during nighttime. • Conducting regular inspections of public toilets to identify and address any maintenance or cleanliness issues promptly. • Developing a public awareness campaign to educate residents and visitors about the location and availability of public toilets. • Exploring technological solutions such as mobile apps or digital maps for real-time information on nearby public toilets.	High	Ongoing	££
Westminster City Council should ensure regular monitoring and managing of the area's street furniture is taking place in order to ensure it is accessible and welcoming for users of the evening and nighttime economies.There should be a particular focus given to ensuring that people with disabilities, people over 65 and families are catered for. A focus should also be given to ensuring street furniture is not blocking any sight lines, creating CCTV blackspots or becoming a space for anti-social behaviour and gathering, all of which contribute to women and girls feeling unsafe.	Medium	Medium	£
Westminster City Council should work with local businesses to review the provision and location of commercial waste bins. Particular attention should be paid to the impact their position has on pedestrian walkways, sightlines and CCTV. The frequency and timings of collection should also be reviewed with a view to reducing the quantity of commercial waste in the public realm.	Medium	Short	£

Crime and Safety

Survey Findings

The user experience survey asked people how safe they felt in Westminster at different times in the evening/night on weeknights (Sunday-Thursday) or weekends (Friday-Saturday). The day of the week appeared to make little difference to the levels of safety reported by survey respondents, with the exception of male respondents feeling less safe on a weekday between 5pm and 9pm (68%) compared to the same times on the weekend (50%). However, the time of day did make a difference: feelings of safety decline as the evening progresses, with the fastest rate of decline occurring after 9pm. The proportion feeling safe or very safe after midnight was slightly lower than before midnight, with the largest decline seen in female respondents on a weekday (43% of whom felt safe before midnight compared to 32% after midnight).

In contrast to the experience survey, the business survey respondents reported that it felt safer to work in Westminster on a weekday than on a weekend – 43% of respondents felt safe between 9pm to midnight on weekdays, compared to 29% at weekends. The downward trend in feelings of safety as the evening progresses echoed that of the experience survey; such that only 18% of business respondents felt safe working in Westminster after midnight on a weekend.

Among the street interviewees, 48% felt safe or very safe being in Westminster at night. The lowest feelings of safety (11%) were reported by people who live in Westminster. Overall, visitors to Westminster felt safe, perhaps suggesting that Westminster feels most unsafe when visitors have left the area. Alternatively, it could be inferred that visitors add to the safety concerns for residents.

When asked what factors made them feel less safe in Westminster between 5pm and 6am, the highest proportion of respondents cited anti-social behaviour as a factor that made them feel less safe (33%). This was equally prevalent across both males and females. Within this category, the predominant factors were drunk people (25%), drug addicts/users (15%), homelessness/rough sleeping (14%) and begging (11%).

Environmental factors accounted for the second greatest proportion of safety concerns (20%); within this, two-thirds of responses (66%) stated that poor lighting made them feel less safe.

The volume of people in the nighttime economy was also a factor affecting feelings of safety in Westminster (18%). Within this, 57% of responses said a lack of people around made them feel unsafe, whilst 27% pointed to overcrowded areas as a factor.

Stakeholder Interviews

In Question 3 (Please could you discuss your perception of the following attributes of Westminster regarding women and girls' safety at night?), 40% of comments relating to safety referenced crime. Participants raised issues concerning gangs, drugs (including the mention of drug dealing by pedicabs), harassment, violence, overall crime rates, and instances of sexual offences. These findings reflect the complex nature of safety concerns, highlighting the need for a multi-faceted approach to address various criminal activities that could potentially impact women's safety in the area.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) emerged as a significant concern, with the main focus being incidents involving intoxicated individuals. Specifically, four comments pointed out concerns regarding drunk individuals, with one participant linking this behaviour to the vulnerability of women.

Crime and Safety

Licensing concerns were also prominent among participants, with worries stemming from the increase in alcohol licences and the prevalence of all-day licences. The lack of businesses operating around the clock was viewed as a contributing factor, potentially leading to reduced street presence and an overall diminished sense of safety.

Additional safety-related issues included a general feeling of unsafety, poorly lit streets, observations of a significant shift in the city's atmosphere between daytime and late-night hours, a perceived lack of enforcement, the perceived need for CCTV surveillance, and concerns about pedestrianised areas contributing to feelings of unsafety. The consistent call for CCTV highlights the apparent significance of enhanced surveillance measures in bolstering safety initiatives.

In response to Question 6 (Do you think more could be done locally to campaign for women and girls' safety? What do you think should be included in this?), 11 participants offered their perspectives, contributing to a total of 21 individual comments across six central themes. While some participants acknowledged existing efforts and, in one instance, expressed scepticism about the feasibility of doing more due to the high volume of people in Westminster and the inclination of some towards excessive drinking, others suggested a shift towards more action-oriented approaches rather than being overly concerned with political correctness.

A recurring suggestion was to include issues related to alcohol and drugs in safety campaigns, with two participants specifically emphasising the subsequent vulnerability that can arise from substance-related situations. Additionally, there was a call to combat ingrained cultural views of women from a young age, indicating a broader societal approach to fostering a safer environment. Suggestions included the creation of more safe spaces, the recruitment of additional volunteers, and the implementation of more services such as the Night Stars. Training was also identified as a crucial aspect, with one comment specifically referencing the need for resources tailored to smaller venues.

Concerns were raised about the potential saturation of initiatives, with two comments suggesting the need for consolidation across organisations to ensure practicality and efficacy, highlighting the importance of coordinated efforts and streamlined approaches in promoting women and girls' safety.

In response to Question 8 (What do you consider to be the top three priorities for women and girls' safety in Westminster at night?), the feedback from ten participants revealed a consensus across several key themes. These responses were categorised into six overarching themes based on the content of the comments.

The first theme, 'increased presence/better training', emerged as the most frequently cited priority, encompassing 32% of the comments. Within this theme, participants stressed the need for augmented or improved police presence and response capabilities, with seven comments emphasising this aspect. Additionally, there were calls for enhanced training for security staff, acknowledged in two comments, to ensure they are equipped to handle various situations. Furthermore, better visibility of official personnel, including police, security, and volunteers, was also highlighted as a crucial factor in bolstering safety.

Another prominent theme focused on 'area changes', with four comments underscoring the necessity for increased CCTV coverage. Participants expressed a belief that the installation of surveillance cameras would contribute significantly to enhancing safety measures.

Crime and Safety

Additionally, two comments advocated for improved street lighting, recognising it as a fundamental aspect of creating secure environments.

Moreover, 'education and raising awareness' constituted another significant theme, with comments suggesting the implementation of behavioural change campaigns. These campaigns were seen as instrumental in shaping attitudes and behaviours to foster a safer environment. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on raising awareness about the effects of alcohol consumption on customer behaviour, along with calls for educational initiatives targeting men to promote respectful behaviour towards women.

The theme of 'better licensing' was also prominent, with comments centring on the enforcement of licensing conditions. Participants urged for a more rigorous approach to licensing, including limits on the number of licences issued, and advocated for venues to take greater responsibility for the safety of their customers.

Participants expressed the need to expand the reach of programmes such as the Night Stars. Additionally, there were calls for improved signposting to safe spaces, recognising the importance of clear directions for those seeking refuge in potentially hazardous situations. Participants emphasised the necessity for such initiatives to be executed effectively and efficiently.

Lastly, all comments pertaining to 'partnership working' were encapsulated in a single comprehensive response. This participant emphasised the need for stronger relationships with the police, advocating for more robust information-sharing practices concerning incidents. Additionally, the response highlighted the importance of fostering a more cohesive bond between the community and businesses to collectively address safety concerns.

Audit Findings

During our overnight audit, one particularly concerning incident involved witnessing an act of violence near a cocktail bar in the early evening. This incident highlights a potential risk, especially for women and tourists who may be particularly vulnerable in such situations.
Additionally, an off-licence venue on Old Compton Street was observed selling balloons to decant nitrous oxide. This raises concerns about substance misuse in public spaces, which can further contribute to an unsafe environment.

In Soho and surrounding areas, we observed a need for designated meeting points, indicating a potential gap in safe gathering spaces, particularly relevant for women seeking safe spots to meet friends or acquaintances in a busy nightlife district. The suggestion for increased advertisement of safety information and reporting avenues reflects a desire for improved accessibility to resources that can aid in maintaining a secure environment. This could be particularly crucial for women who may need immediate assistance or guidance.

The presence of a car park in the midst of a bustling pedestrian area in Chinatown also raises concerns about the potential hazards associated with vehicular traffic in an area primarily designed for foot traffic, posing risks for those navigating through crowded streets. Furthermore, the mention of a fatal stabbing the week prior to the audit, without apparent awareness or a perceived lack of necessary police presence, indicates potential gaps in law enforcement response and public information dissemination following such incidents.

The prevalence of rough sleepers, underscores the vulnerability of both homeless individuals and consumers in the area. Additionally, the presence of spice users in the area indicates a potential threat to public safety. This may have implications for women who could encounter

Crime and Safety

individuals under the influence of this substance. The suggestion for touchpoints along King's Scholars' Passage signifies a need for accessible points where individuals, including women, can seek assistance or information, potentially enhancing safety in the area.

Incidents of violence, substance misuse, the need for designated meeting points and improved safety information dissemination all have notable implications for safety in the borough. Addressing these findings is crucial for creating a safer and more secure environment for all individuals, especially women, within these areas.

Crime and Safety Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The nighttime economy working group should commit to developing and circulating annual surveys across the borough to identify the ongoing challenges and concerns about women's and girls' safety at night. These surveys should target consumers, residents, employees and business owners in the borough. Westminster should use these surveys to track the progress of VAWG-related measures based on an increased perception of safety and increased response rate.	High	Short	£
A review of the crime hotspots as detailed in this report should be undertaken by key partners with an action plan for each area created and monitored by a task group.	Medium	Medium	££



Services and Welfare

Survey Findings

Safe spaces, defined in each survey as any service or business that acts as a temporary refuge when a person is feeling unsafe, were favoured by 49% of consumer survey respondents (being slightly more popular amongst females than males) and by 36% of business respondents.

Some respondents to the user survey and the street interviews wanted to see an increased supportive presence ('trustworthy people in official uniforms for women's safety'), public transport stewards or volunteers who could provide help/signposting. These services were specifically mentioned as an alternative to the police. However, an increased authoritative presence, especially the form of more visible police, was the more popular solution and featured strongly across the surveys.

Technological safety solutions such as apps and location monitoring were mentioned by a few respondents.

Meanwhile, 29% of user survey respondents said that increased cleanliness would make Westminster's NTE more appealing. Cleanliness was the third most popular answer amongst female respondents, after police presence and safety factors.

Stakeholder Interviews

In response to Question 4c (How do you feel about the availability of ambulance service or health care providers in the evening? Is it adequate, well-positioned and responsive?), seven participants shared their perspectives, generating nine individual comments. Despite the relatively low number of responses, various viewpoints emerged, making it difficult to categorise them into distinct themes.

There was a varied pereption regarding response times, with two participants expressing confidence in the promptness of services, noting that response times were generally good. However, contrasting this, one participant cited prior experiences, indicating that there have been delays in response. This discrepancy in experiences underscores the need for a more consistent and reliable healthcare response, especially during evening hours when emergencies can occur.

Volunteer-led services received a commendation from one respondent, highlighting their positive impact in providing assistance during nighttime hours. There was a general appreciation from the stakeholders for the Night Stars (and their predecessors). However, while Night Stars were acknowledged for their contributions to managing issues, it was also recognised that they did not entirely resolve them with one respondent commenting that: "Night Stars don't solve a problem; it's just a service to help manage the problem."

One participant recommended the implementation of safety buses, a measure that could help alleviate pressure on ambulance resources. These specialised buses could attend to low-level injuries and cases of intoxication, allowing ambulances to focus on more critical situations. The recognition of volunteer-led services and the recommendation for safety buses indicate a willingness to explore innovative solutions to enhance healthcare accessibility during nighttime hours.

Services and Welfare

Audit Findings

Throughout the night audits, the absence of a visible voluntary or healthcare presence was notable. During the first two audits conducted on a Wednesday and Saturday, neither statutory agencies nor volunteers were observed patrolling the area. Only parking enforcement officers were observed, indicating a potential lack of dedicated resources for maintaining safety during nighttime hours. This absence could potentially leave a void in ensuring the safety of individuals navigating the area during the evening.

It was observed that the Night Hub at St Anne's Church Hall was closed during the audits conducted on Wednesday and Saturday. It has been noted since the audit that this is due to the Night Hub operating on Friday nights, from 7pm to 5am only. The closure of such a resource, especially on Saturdays, could hinder individuals seeking assistance, especially in moments of vulnerability. The Westminster Night Stars website page highlights that the Night Hub and Night Stars 'will soon be working on Saturday'; however, a timeframe for this expansion has not been identified. An absence of signposting for the Night Stars, the Night Hub or Street Pastors raises questions about the visibility and accessibility of these crucial support services during the evening, nonetheless, as highlighted above, this could be due to the operating hours not currently extended to Saturday night. Subsequently, it would help to raise awareness and understanding of what the scheme has to offer, if it were visibility promoted and signposted at all times.

Additionally, the presence of a soup kitchen on the Strand, operating up to three times a day and concluding by 10pm most nights, has implications for the influx of people into the area. While charitable efforts are commendable, there is a need for coordination to ensure that services are distributed effectively and in a way that complements overall safety objectives. Furthermore, the provision of tents by charities may inadvertently contribute to keeping rough sleepers on the streets, potentially affecting their safety and wellbeing.

The promotion and enforcement of safe spaces is an essential aspect of ensuring the safety of individuals, particularly women, in the nighttime economy. Currently, there seems to be a gap in effectively communicating and regulating these designated areas, which could be pivotal for those seeking respite or assistance during the evening.

Services and Welfare Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The Night Stars should work to integrate with a safety app to provide additional support and bolster the initiative.	Medium	Medium	£
The nighttime economy working group and Westminster's evening and nighttime economy venues/ businesses should work with local violence against women and girls charities and groups to host women's safety workshops and seminars during daytime hours. This could run in accordance with female-only nights and attendees of the workshops/ seminars could be given free or discounted entry.	Medium	Short	£
Westminster City Council and the nighttime economy working group should collate a full list of safety and support services currently operating during evening and nighttime economy hours across the borough. Social media should be used to promote these services and recruit volunteers. This should also be published on the Westminster website.	High	Short	£
A review of daytime services should be performed and an assessment should be made about which of these services should also be available at night, along with a cost and benefit analysis for doing this. Services that could be considered include: • Drugs and alcohol services • Mental health provision • Domestic abuse • Rape and sexual assault	High	Medium	£
Westminster City Council and the nighttime economy working group should collate a full list of voluntary sector organisations and services currently operating for the region's nighttime economies. They should work with the identified voluntary sector to support continued facilitation and funding of the services.	High	Medium	£
There should be a comprehensive review of healthcare provision and practice in the borough's evening and nighttime economies with a focus on women's safety, domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse. This could be undertaken by the nighttime economy working group in partnership with local healthcare providers. They should assess: • What services are available at night • Where they are available • How they are advertised • Accessibility • Response times • Offer	High	Short	£
Westminster City Council, the Metropolitan Police and the Ambulance Service should continue to come together to review the data analysis presented in this report relating to the intersections between crime, anti-social behaviour and ambulance call outs.The key trends and hotspots should be used to develop a partnership strategy on how to tackle these issues. From this, a data dashboard should be created and reviewed, monitored and corresponding actions supported by NEWG.	Medium	Medium	£
More secure and ongoing funding should be secured for the Night Stars group.	Medium	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should work with local partners and the voluntary sector to set up a safe space bus or temporary pop-up site to operate around the borough during peak times such as: • Key student weeks (freshers, re-freshers, end of exams, graduation) • Bank holiday weekends • Football matches and tournaments • Large events and festivals The safe space bus should also advertise Ask for Angela and a safety app such as StreetSafe app, SafeUp app, etc	Medium	Medium	££
Providing sustainable long-term funding for essential safety services such as the Safe Spaces, sexual health services and Street Presence.	Medium	Medium	££

Enforcement

Survey Findings

A desire for more visible police officers in the NTE was a strong theme across all three surveys. It was the joint top response in the user experience survey (62%, rising to 70% amongst females). Visible police presence was also the most favoured safety option amongst the business respondents (71%). 66% of business respondents thought that more police would help increase footfall in the NTE. The street interviewees also called for 'neighbourhood police', 'more police on the night tube' and 'more female officers who understand safety concerns'. The trustworthiness of the police was mentioned as a concern in the street interviews, although this was not a commonly expressed concern.

35% of user experience respondents named CCTV as a factor that would make them feel safer in Westminster in night. Some respondents specifically wanted to see enhanced CCTV and monitoring, including in alleyways and on public transport. 39% of business respondents said CCTV would make them feel safer in Westminster's NTE.

Stakeholder Interviews

In response to Question 4b (How do you feel about the uniformed police presence at night? Is it adequate, well-positioned, responsive and approachable?), all 11 participants offered their perspectives, generating a total of 27 individual comments. Notably, there was only one positive response, which acknowledged an improvement in policing efforts. However, an ambiguous response emerged, pointing out that while the area may have the largest volume of available police, the sheer number of people may equate to a higher incidence of crime.

The overwhelming sentiment, voiced by 91% of respondents and accounting for 37% of individual comments, was that there was a palpable deficiency in police presence during nighttime hours. This perceived shortage raises concerns about the capacity of law enforcement to effectively ensure public safety, particularly in areas characterised by a vibrant nightlife.

Two participants expressed reservations about the experience level of the police force, suggesting that they may be less seasoned in handling the complexities of nighttime policing. Such observations highlight potential areas for improvement training and policy protocols.

Several other comments touched on various aspects of police performance. Some participants felt that the police were not easily accessible, indicating a potential gap in community engagement efforts. Concerns were raised about the response times for low-level crimes, which could hinder the timely resolution of minor incidents. Additionally, there was a perception that law enforcement efforts were disproportionately focused on specific streets, potentially leaving other areas under policed.

A lack of trust and confidence in the police was a recurring theme in the responses. Participants cited issues related to consistency, discipline, and overall confidence in the effectiveness of police interventions. These sentiments indicate a need for concerted efforts to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the community.

The reporting process emerged as another area of concern. One participant noted that a lack of response from the police following a report could discourage future reporting. Additionally, the absence of open police stations limits reporting options to telephone, potentially posing challenges for those who may prefer or require in-person assistance.

Enforcement

A broader observation was made regarding the correlation between the presence of budget-friendly bars and an increased incidence of crime, potentially suggesting that the affordability of alcohol may contribute to a higher frequency of incidents throughout the week rather than just on weekends.

Audit Findings

During the night audits, our observations revealed an absence of visible police presence throughout the areas examined. Police officers were not observed patrolling during the first two audits on either foot patrols or vehicle rounds. Furthermore, there was no evidence of officers patrolling the venues, which could have offered a sense of security for patrons and residents alike. On the third audit of the Victoria and Embankment area, only a pair of officers were observed patrolling the area outside Heaven nightclub. This raises significant concerns about the capacity of law enforcement to maintain order and ensure the safety of individuals, particularly women, who may be navigating these bustling areas during the nighttime.

Two parked police vans were sighted, but notably they were unattended, indicating a lack of active policing in the vicinity. This further reinforces the perception of limited police coverage during nighttime hours. Moreover, our team did not observe any licensing staff conducting checks.

CCTV surveillance was conspicuously lacking, with only a few visible cameras spotted. The absence of signs indicating ‘CCTV in operation’, which can serve as a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour, further highlights a potential deficiency in security measures. This absence of a robust surveillance system raises concerns about the effectiveness of monitoring and response capabilities in the event of incidents.

In Soho and the surrounding areas, the lack of police presence, especially on busy streets, is a significant concern. The absence of security and police personnel in specific locations, such as 76 Dean Street, further underscores potential vulnerabilities in the safety of individuals frequenting these areas.

Overall, the audit findings align with the sentiments expressed in the survey and interviews, highlighting a pervasive concern regarding the inadequacy of visible policing in the nighttime economy. This discrepancy between public expectations and the reality of policing in Westminster's NTE is a critical issue that requires attention and potential reform. The call for increased CCTV coverage further underscores the need for resource allocation and ongoing monitoring commitments from both law enforcement and local authorities to ensure the safety of individuals, particularly women, in these vibrant nightlife districts.

Enforcement Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The installation of help buttons should be considered within key locations for concern. These would provide a connection to the MET's CCTV room for individuals who wish to report an incident or raise a concern that needs immediate intervention. The rota for the MET's CCTV room should be reviewed to ensure there is adequate staffing to facilitate the implementation and, more widely, to ensure there is always a presence in the control room. These would act as a deterrent against negative public behaviours and provide reassurance for women and girls using these areas. Northampton's installation of Help Points should be consulted. https://www.wcctv.co.uk/northamptonshire-police-deploy-wcctv-help-points/	Medium	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should work together with their CCTV and lighting departments to improve interconnected access to their facilities' controls. This is currently being piloted in the Shepherd's Bush Green action forum lighting scheme where over lighting in the area can be controlled from the CCTV room in the event that negative public behaviours are witnessed on camera. This would be an effective permanent practice to have in place throughout the area.	Medium	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should work with the CCTV operation team to review their current operating procedures and ensure staffing timetables are conducive to having efficient coverage and monitoring throughout the borough.	Medium	Medium	££
A service level agreement to fix broken CCTV and lighting should be drawn up with remedial action expected on reporting of an issue within one week.	High	Short	£
Westminster Council should work with the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and volunteer groups to review current enforcement practices in the borough with a particular lens of women's and girls' safety. This should ensure that enforcement is consistent and supportive of women's safety and any changes should be made in consultation with women.	High	Short	££

Westminster Council should work with the Metropolitan Police, city inspectors, Transport for London, and volunteer groups to discuss strategies for increasing visibility and marshalling around particular premises and during key times and or events. These should include:
• Secondary and higher education premises at key times such as:
  ◦ Start of the day
  ◦ Lunchtime
  ◦ Home time
• Football events
• Late night retail
• Night markets
• Public transport
• Public transport hubs and stations
• Festivals and festivities such as Christmas.
	High	Short	££

A representative from the city inspectors' team should have a place in the nighttime economy working group and regularly attend Pubwatch meetings to improve connection with the community and nighttime economy businesses. Women and girls' safety should be a key agenda item for these groups.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group and Westminster City Council should work with the MET police to offer nighttime-specific training to police officers working in the ENTE to improve the safety of women and girls using the nighttime economy area. This should include: • Vulnerability management training • Anti-drink spiking training • Bystander intervention training • Spotting signs of vulnerabilities in women and girls. These should be made available through e-learning modules to ensure all officers can take the training at times and dates in line with their duties and shift patterns.			
Policing strategy for managing the nighttime economy should be created by the Metropolitan Police, with the assistance of Westminster City Council. This should have a distinct focus on vulnerability and safety measures for women and girls at night.	High	Long	££

Venue Governance

Survey Findings

Survey respondents were asked about how safe they perceived certain venues/locations to be for women and girls between the hours of 5pm and 6am in Westminster. Spa and beauty venues were considered the safest locations for women and girls by all respondents, with 61% perceiving them to be either safe or very safe. This was followed by restaurants (59%), coffee and/or dessert shops (57%) and cinemas/theatres (57%). The least safe location reported by all respondents was nightclubs, with only 26% considering them to be safe or very safe for women and girls. This was followed by casinos (34%), pubs and/or bars (38%) and late-night shopping (40%).

Respondents were also asked how venues/locations could be made safer. There were a range of suggestions with implications for venue management, such as increased security, more power and responsibility for security staff and having more female security staff.

They also suggested that stronger licensing laws/regulations would help reduce drunkenness or limit the number of premises, such as nightclubs. A further suggestion was stronger venue management to ensure that employees comply with existing regulations.

48% of respondents to the user experience survey said that safe venue schemes would make them feel safer in Westminster between 5pm and 6am (this was the highest scoring suggestion amongst male respondents at 49%).

Stakeholder Interviews

In Question 4 (How well do you think key stakeholders work together in Westminster to address VAWG-related issues?), a major message emerging from stakeholders was the challenges posed by the sheer number of licensed premises within a small area, both for residents living close by and agencies trying to manage the NTE. Views were expressed that the licensing authority was not enforcing the rules already in place. For example, premises were serving alcohol to people who were clearly inebriated. Residents were concerned about bars offering cheap alcohol deals that encouraged excessive drinking.

Audit Findings

The overnight audits highlighted notable concerns surrounding venue management, in both national chains and independent businesses. A prevalent issue observed was queue management, where lines for venues intersected with one another, leading to congestion on pavements. Some venues lacked security staff overseeing queues and smoking areas, potentially contributing to disorganised and potentially unsafe conditions.

Early evening security staff were generally observed to be appropriately attired, donning hi-vis stab vests, black clothing and displaying SIA badges, projecting a strong and uniformed presence. However, as the night progressed, security staff outside late-night venues tended to forgo hi-vis attire, potentially diminishing their visibility on CCTV cameras. This observation highlights a potential area for improvement in maintaining vigilant security measures throughout the night.

The choice of drinkware in venues was also a prominent observation. While some establishments opted for plastic drinkware, a significant

Venue Governance

number continued to serve drinks in glass containers. This was evident from the substantial number of customers seen consuming beverages from glasses on the streets. This practice poses potential safety risks, particularly if incidents occur that involve broken glass.

The availability of a 'city link radio' system for venues to escalate issues or share security information was markedly absent or unclear. In one instance, a door supervisor mentioned that the radio was stored in an office, making it less readily accessible. This lack of immediate communication channels between late-night businesses could potentially hinder the swift resolution of issues or emergencies.

Furthermore, there appeared to be a general ambiguity surrounding the mechanisms for reporting issues between late-night businesses. The promotion of safe spaces also emerged as a potential area for improvement, indicating a need for clearer protocols and communication channels in this regard.

On a positive note, the popular LGBTQIA+ venue, Heaven, demonstrated effective queue management with well-lit surroundings, attentive security staff, and efficient crowd control measures. This exemplar case highlights the potential benefits of organised and well-managed queuing systems in contributing to a safer nighttime environment.

In Soho and the surrounding areas, specific issues were identified, including patrons drinking on the streets with glass containers, the absence of WAVE training for security staff, and a lack of visible security and police presence. Additionally, the impact of noise pollution from clubs and bars on local residents was a concern, particularly on Greek Street, where nightlife activities appeared to spill onto the footpaths.

In Victoria, the observations indicated that the security focus of the McDonald's premises was primarily confined within its premises, potentially leaving areas outside less monitored. Furthermore, the presence of three separate, uncoordinated police teams overseeing the vicinity outside McDonald's raises questions about the effectiveness of their operations in maintaining safety and order.

Overall, the audit findings shed light on critical aspects of venue management and security practices in the West End. From queue management to drinkware choices, each observation holds implications for the safety and wellbeing of patrons, particularly women, in these bustling nightlife districts. These insights provide valuable considerations for potential enhancements in safety protocols and practices.

Venue Governance Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The Ask For Angela campaign should be extended to all business sectors within the borough including day and nighttime operators. TfL should also be invited to work in partnership to promote this scheme across its transportation facilities throughout the borough. A borough-wide marketing campaign could be launched surrounding the extension of the Ask for Angela campaign and how the scheme works. Advertising of participation in the scheme should be displayed on the outside of the business premises and on public transport, where possible. Participating venues should have access to training tools to understand and appropriately deliver requirements of the Ask for Angela scheme.	High	Ongoing	££
The nighttime economy working group should work with all stakeholders, businesses and communities to share template policies, training and practices to address women and girls' safety in the area to ensure everyone is working to the same standards. This could include: • Vulnerability management • Women and girls' safety • Anti-drink spiking • Stand by Her • Anti-sexual harassment • Ask for Angela • Shout Out The Night Safe Accreditation scheme should be rolled out to all venues operating in the evening and nighttime economy providing policies, posters, training and tools for venues to use.	High	Short	££
The nighttime economy working group should work with businesses and venues to provide signposting inside their establishments regarding the support services available for vulnerable people and mental health first aid.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should work with local partners to set up and promote a 'buddy system' for workers in the borough's evening and nighttime economy when walking home from a venue or business.	Medium	Medium	£
Create e-marketing, physical marketing and signposting materials for businesses/ venues to display around their premises to ensure all operators and staff know how to identify, report, and manage the vulnerability of women and girls.	High	Short	£
Encourage venues to commit, where relevant and possible, to delivering a high-quality security experience by having: • A door security policy. • A clear procedure for all major incident types for security staff that must be read, signed and renewed every six months. • Qualified SIA door staff who wear visible SIA badges. • Clear policies and procedures for crowd management and dispersal that gives consideration to the impact on women and girls' safety. • A published door security complaints policy and procedure for any occasion where it is felt that the security team did not comply with their roles and responsibilities.	High	Short	£
Ensure that there is a visible and well communicated zero-tolerance approach to negative public behaviours inside and outside of venues, in the street and on public transport such as sexual harassment, violence, anti-social behaviour, homophobia, transphobia and racism. This could be achieved through an extension of the It's Her City Too campaign.	High	Medium	££

Training

Survey Findings

The results of the business survey showed that engagement in safety campaigns and initiatives in Westminster appeared to be quite low. When asked about business engagement with safety campaigns and initiatives, just under one-third said their business or place of work conducted vulnerability training. This was the highest response, followed by anti-drink spiking training (28%) and the Ask for Angela initiative (28%). Only 20% of respondents stated that they would like more information on safety campaigns and initiatives.

When NTE customers were asked what locations/venues could do to improve the safety of women and girls in the experience survey, they mentioned staff training on violence and sexual harassment. They also suggested initiatives to educate men on sexual harassment and violence and to encourage men to challenge their peers over unacceptable behaviours. Proposed actions included posters in restrooms and learning in schools and the home. Awareness-raising campaigns were also mentioned in the street interviews. There was a small cluster of responses suggesting various ways in which women could manage their vulnerability and protect themselves through education/awareness of risks, limiting/avoiding being out at night, especially alone, and self-defence.

Significantly, behaviour change initiatives for men and vulnerability management for women were much less preferred options than an 'increased authoritative/police presence' and 'reducing crime/anti-social behaviour by design', such as better street lighting, especially amongst female respondents.

Stakeholder Interviews

In response to Question 7 (What do you think should be included in the Westminster safety training charter?), insights from eight participants provided a range of valuable perspectives, resulting in 21 individual comments that can be broadly classified into six key themes.

Firstly, 28.6% of comments emphasised the importance of instilling a heightened awareness of the consequences of anti-social and criminal behaviour. Participants underscored the need to place a greater onus on businesses, particularly those offering discounted alcohol, to proactively contribute to safety efforts within the community. This perspective highlights the potential impact of incentivising businesses to adopt responsible practices that contribute to the overall wellbeing and safety of patrons.

Approximately 19% of responses articulated a call for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, emphasising the need for inclusive training initiatives that target a wider audience. This included suggestions for widespread training programmes, such as the WAVE (Work Against Violence and Exploitation) training, and the endorsement of a holistic training approach that equips individuals with a well-rounded skill set to address safety concerns effectively.

Three comments highlighted the importance of extending the authority of security staff, granting them greater agency to intervene in situations of conflict or harassment that may occur further away from the venue's entrance. This approach advocates for a proactive stance in maintaining safety and order within the vicinity of establishments, potentially preventing incidents before they escalate.

One comment emphasised the necessity of enforcing licensing

Training

conditions more rigorously, particularly in instances where individuals are visibly intoxicated, to curtail further alcohol consumption. This recommendation aligns with efforts to create an environment that prioritises the wellbeing and safety of all patrons.

Education emerged as a theme in the phone call responses. For example, participants proposed early education initiatives targeting men, including bystander training, in order to raise awareness and understanding of issues related to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Another respondent advocated for education surrounding vigilance in drink monitoring, underscoring the significance of ensuring the safety of beverages to prevent potential harm.

Several business and statutory stakeholders also discussed the variety of safety accreditation and training schemes run by the BID, licensing authority, as well as Best Bar None and others. They felt these should be consolidated and that it would be more effective for everyone to work to one standard. One respondent championed the concept of collaborative partnerships, urging businesses and organisations to unite in crafting a unified safety charter. This suggestion highlights the potential benefits of pooling resources and expertise to develop a comprehensive safety framework that transcends individual establishments.

Audit Findings

During the night audits, observations were made regarding the presence and dissemination of safety messages in the Westminster area. These findings hold significant implications for women's safety and the overall wellbeing of patrons.

Firstly, the absence of safety messages in prominent locations around Westminster was observed. This deficiency indicates a potential gap in public awareness and preparedness for safety-related issues, which is crucial for ensuring the wellbeing of individuals, especially women, navigating the nighttime environment. Messages regarding risks such as pickpocketing, unlicensed taxis, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and the presence of CCTV are fundamental in empowering individuals with the knowledge needed to protect themselves.

The interactions witnessed between security staff and vulnerable customers indicate potential gaps in the implementation of WAVE training at some venues. Effective training is critical in equipping security staff with the skills and knowledge needed to identify and support individuals who may be in vulnerable situations. The observed discrepancies highlight the importance of ensuring consistent and thorough training protocols across all venues.

Further to this point, the lack of WAVE (Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement) stickers continues to accentuate the absence of this critical training. WAVE stickers help signal to patrons that a venue is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment. Their absence suggests a potential oversight in prioritising the welfare and safety of vulnerable individuals.

This absence was also noted regarding the Ask for Angela Campaign.

Training

This raises concerns about the accessibility of this scheme, potentially leaving patrons without a discreet means of seeking help. This also indicates that those working in hospitality establishments may not be aware of the steps to take if they are confronted with an incident.

Additionally, the presence of outdated COVID-19 signage on bus shelters indicates a need for up-to-date information and messaging to reflect current safety concerns and priorities. Ensuring that signage is relevant and accurate is essential in maintaining an environment that is responsive to evolving safety needs.



Training Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
We recommend that Westminster City Council develop a male accountability activation strategy and plan which will include consultations with men and boys in the community to look at behaviours, culture and engagement to make long-lasting change at a local level. This should then be rolled out across schools, community centres and sports groups across the borough. Calls for participation should be advertised on platforms including social media, local businesses, electronic screens, parks, and community-based locations, including transport hubs, to reach as many members of the public as possible. This strategy should be accompanied by a social media campaign promoting male accountability and raising awareness regarding the impact of sexual harassment, how to keep women safe and how to be good bystanders. This can build on the Mayor of London's 'Have a Word', and Westminster City Council's 'It's Her City Too' campaigns. This work should also include a series of educational workshops and training sessions relating to women and girls' safety, available support, and reporting procedures and protocols. These workshops should then be handed to the schools to run on an annual basis, with the impact assessed via attendee surveys. These should be delivered to: • Pupils (aged 11+) • Parents, guardians, and responsible adults • Stakeholders • Day time retail.	High	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should develop an area-wide vulnerability management strategy and accompanying policies.	High	Ongoing	£
The findings of this report highlighted that many of the women and girls who participated in this research were unaware of the Westminster Night Safety programme. The nighttime economy working group should work with Westminster City Council to develop a PR campaign for the Westminster Night Safety programme and include an app in this programme to maximise exposure and publicity. This should include: • Promotion across all stakeholder social media. • Local television adverts. • Banners and posters on bus stops and the side of buses. • Posters in evening and nighttime economy venues and businesses. • London-based social media influencers should be contacted and asked to share to their followers. • Posters in schools, faith communities, health care providers, council and police buildings and workplaces. • Working with local influencers to promote the app.	High	Short	££
The nighttime economy working group should conduct a review of what safety training is available to nighttime economy venues and what the uptake is. There should be a specific focus on training that focuses on the safety of women and girls.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should work closely with local secondary and higher education institutions and other local education providers to establish current training programmes pertaining to night safety and student vulnerability.	Medium	Medium	££

Training Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
The nighttime economy working group should identify providers who can deliver the following training programmes for ENTE venues that appeal to women and girls: • Vulnerability management • Anti-sexual harassment • Women's safety • Anti-drink spiking • Responsible alcohol retailing • Disability awareness • Equality and diversity • Mental health first aid training • Bystander intervention training. Westminster City Council should ensure that this training and any refresher training courses are accessible and available to venues on a regular basis. These training sessions should also be made compulsory for all external contractors.	High	Medium	££
Westminster City Council should work with local VAWG organisations and local secondary and higher education institutions to develop and deliver anti-violence against women and girls training workshops directed at young males. These workshops should then be handed to the schools to run on an annual basis, with the impact assessed via attendee surveys. These should focus on: • Categorisation of sexual harassment and negative public behaviours (especially catcalling, stalking and assault). • The impact of these behaviours on the safety of women and girls. • Tips and tools for how men can change and regulate their behaviour. • How to hold their friends accountable when observing these behaviours. • How to report incidents of sexual harassment or assault. These sessions should be made compulsory for all males over 11 in secondary education and all men over 18 in higher education.	Medium	Ongoing	££
Westminster City Council should work with local VAWG organisations to develop an online influencer campaign surrounding women and girls' safety at night. Local male influencers and celebrities should be identified and contacted with a view to participating in the campaign, sharing tips with their male followers on how to change negative male behaviours and holding their friends and others accountable.	Medium	Medium	££
Venues should be encouraged to deliver, support and attend training to enhance venue governance, safety and vulnerability management, including training on anti-drink spiking, anti-sexual harassment and care of people who identify as disabled and LGBTQIA+ to ensure that all venues are considered safe spaces for women, BIPOC and the LGBTQIA+ community.	High	Ongoing	££

Partnership Working

Stakeholder Interviews

The responses to Question 5 (How well do you feel the stakeholders, businesses and venues in Westminster take action against issues/concerns relating to women and girls' safety?) offered a limited but diverse perspective. Among the five participants who provided feedback, a mixture of positive and critical views emerged, yielding a range of individual comments that did not coalesce into discernible themes.

Two participants conveyed positive sentiments regarding the efforts made by stakeholders and businesses in addressing safety concerns for women and girls. One individual remarked on the perceived heightened efforts of the council compared to previous periods of time. Additionally, another participant highlighted the Night Stars initiative and volunteers as a positive step, noting that certain venues in the area diligently looked after their patrons. These perspectives recognise some proactive measures being taken to bolster safety.

Conversely, concerns were raised regarding the comprehension and actions of stakeholders and businesses in Westminster. Some respondents expressed apprehension that decision-makers may not fully grasp the area's nuances, potentially leading to decisions that do not adequately address safety concerns. This indicates a perceived need for more comprehensive consumer and resident engagement, training and education to ensure that decisions are contextually sound and beneficial for the community.

Participants also called for stricter monitoring and enforcement of alcohol licences, underscoring the belief that this could contribute to a safer environment for women and girls. Additionally, there was an emphasis on venues assuming a degree of responsibility for the wellbeing of individuals leaving their premises, and beyond the confines of their establishment.

Inconsistency with incident reporting was also highlighted, presenting an opportunity for authorities, statutory bodies and venues to work together to develop consistent and transparent reporting mechanisms to accurately gauge and address safety concerns.

The responses to Question 4 (How well do you think key stakeholders work together in Westminster to address VAWG-related issues?) highlighted a diversity of opinions among the participants. All 11 respondents provided feedback, generating a total of 37 individual comments. These remarks did not coalesce into clear-cut themes, but they were categorised based on positive and negative perceptions.

Almost half of the comments conveyed negative sentiments about the efficacy of key stakeholders' collaboration. These responses articulated concerns such as the absence of established VAWG-related priorities between the community and the police, venues appearing to operate beyond their capacity with inadequate security measures, and a general lack of trust in door security staff. Participants also voiced worries about insufficient police resources, the proliferation of licensed premises, and the perception of a constant turnover in policing staff, which hindered the establishment of enduring relationships. Criticisms extended to bureaucratic delays within the council, challenges posed by late-night venues, and perceptions of misogyny within the police force. There was also an expressed belief that the abundance of alcohol in the area contributes to VAWG-related risks and incidents.

Positive comments acknowledged instances of effective collaboration between the council and the police, citing their working relationship. Additionally, respondents praised the responsiveness of the Soho Community group and noted the success of the WAVE training

Partnership Working

programme. Some respondents expressed an overall positive sentiment, affirming that VAWG-related initiatives in place were functioning well. The focus on diversity and inclusion by the council was also highlighted as a positive aspect.

Whilst successful collaboration between stakeholders is acknowledged, concerns were voiced about various aspects of the current approach. These included challenges in relationship-building, resource allocation, and the need for more unified strategies.

Audit Findings

A spectrum of engagement levels among key stakeholders was observed during the audits. While some demonstrated proactive engagement, others have presented challenges in terms of accessibility and participation. Increased engagement demonstrates a positive commitment to potential benefits for the borough, whilst a lack of engagement can hinder the audit process's overall effectiveness and diminish the quality of the subsequent strategic recommendations produced.

A positive development worth mentioning is the partnerships forged through Westminster's Night Safety programme. These partnerships represent a step in the right direction, fostering collaboration and communication between stakeholders. Building on such initiatives can further strengthen the borough's collective efforts to address local challenges.

Nevertheless, there remains a need for stakeholders to be more responsive and engaged throughout the process. Higher participation in the overnight audit and stakeholder phone calls, for example, would have provided a more robust foundation for analysis. This underscores the importance of not only involving stakeholders but ensuring their active and sustained participation.

The West End crime reduction partnership has taken steps to address safety concerns within the NTE, and Soho Pubwatch, a platform for businesses to collectively address safety issues, was also acknowledged. However, concerns were raised about low attendance, indicating a potential area for improvement. Additionally, the absence of specific toolkits for commercial premises and the lack of enforcement mechanisms for reporting incidents were prominent observations. The absence of a structured late-night reporting system between businesses was identified as a gap in the existing safety framework.

Another finding from the audit pertained to specific challenges faced by organisations working to assist the houseless community in Westminster, revealing a lack of coordination among different charities, as well as between charities and the council. This lack of coordination can inadvertently lead to the concentration of homeless individuals in certain areas, such as the Strand, which may result in overcrowding. This issue further highlights the interconnectedness of the houseless population with anti-social behaviour (ASB), exposing individuals experiencing homelessness to additional risks and harsh living conditions.

Parnership Working Recommendations	Importance	Timescale	Cost
Westminster City Council should support and help facilitate the deliveries of local business partnership groups such as Safer Business Network and the borough's Pubwatch alliances. These groups should meet in person or online to enable small businesses to participate and share information, promotional material and business advice across the borough. Business operating practices pertaining to women and girls' safety should be a key agenda item at each meeting.	High	Short	£
The nighttime economy working group should create a way for businesses, residents, and NTE consumers to contact them with questions, concerns or contributions. This could be a website or email address.	High	Short	£
Soho and HOLBA Pubwatch groups should work with police, Street Pastors and Night Stars to share information on upcoming events and the expected footfall in order for resources to be allocated to ensure the best services can be provided. This should also include the scheduling for a safe space bus.	High	Ongoing	£
The nighttime economy working group should promote the use of radios currently provided by Safer Business Network for all evening and nighttime economy venues across the whole Borough. These radio channels should be used to contact CCTV, Street Pastors, the safe space, the LET team and other venues.	Medium	Medium	££
All venues should be encouraged by the nighttime economy working group to actively participate in Pubwatch. All Pubwatch meetings should make VAWG a key agenda item. An engagement plan should be developed in the event of low uptake.	Short	Medium	£
Creation of a data protection protocol to enable and facilitate sharing of real-time information and data and the creation of a data dashboard so that KPIs made as recommendations in this report can be monitored by the nighttime economy working group and action forum. This should include: • Crime data to include a report crimes against women and girls • Anti-social behaviour data • Alcohol and health data • Composition data • Footfall data • Perceptions • Patronage • Economic growth	High	Short	£

Night Safety

Women's Safety Audit

Westminster City Council



NTES

City of Westminster