

# WORKING NIGHTS

municipal strategies  
for nocturnal workers



Autonomy

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FEMINIST FUTURES  
PROGRAMME



Autonomy

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## **References**

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## Key Messages

- Precarity is a defining characteristic of shift and night work: workers do not choose to work at night, but are often forced to
- The rise of **precarious night work** is partly due to the changing nature of the labour economy. This is particularly true for delivery and care workers
- **Sex work** is rarely included in the Night Time Economy (NTE), but there are an estimated 72,800 sex workers in the UK and working at night is common. It is important to include them in progressive debates about the NTE
- Workers in logistics - those employed in the chain that connects warehouses to retailing, are particularly affected by the precarity-shift work nexus
- This report considers **municipal strategies** as a means to democratise the NTE, these include policy proposals and foundational infrastructures
- The report argues that a key step to **democratise the economy** is addressing the precarity of night-time workers
- The report calls for the creation of 24hr infrastructures for workers. These autonomous structures should be funded by leveraging resources from companies capitalising on the expansion of night work
- Using the framework of Public Commons Partnerships (PCPs), local governments can collaborate with unions, workers and grassroots organisations on a democratic management of the NTE
- The solutions and policies in this report are not intended to encourage more night work: evidence shows the detrimental health effects of shift work on workers.



# INTRODUCTION



## Introduction

1 in 9 people in the UK work at night - the highest proportion of the workforce since ONS records began in 2005.<sup>1</sup> The Night-Time Industries Association (NTIA) estimates that the UK night-time economy (NTE) contributes 5.1% of the GDP in the UK and is a fast-growing employment sector.<sup>2</sup> Night-time work has been celebrated for its benefits to businesses and consumers as part of an expanding NTE, but it presents many challenges to workers which are often overlooked.

Night work - taken here as work occurring between 6pm and 6am - is generally more precarious than day work. Workers on zero-hour contracts are twice as likely to work night shifts than other workers,<sup>3</sup> and twice as many workers in the London NTE earn below the London living wage as jobs across all other occupations.<sup>4</sup> Night workers are also denied equal access to services and infrastructure which are available to day-time workers but limited at night, such as transport and childcare.

In this way, night work is characterised by distinct inequalities, and even within the NTE these are unevenly borne between workers. In London, which represents 40% of national night-time revenue,<sup>5</sup> there are more men (68%) than women (32%) working at night,<sup>6</sup> women are more likely to be on low pay, and 34% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers work at night.<sup>7</sup>

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1 TUC, 2019a.

2 NTIA, 2021.

3 GLA, 2018, p. 14.

4 TUC, 2019b.

5 GLA, 2017b, p. 8.

6 LNTEC, 2019, p. 7.

7 GLA, 2018, p. 13.

This briefing places work and workers at the centre of the NTE. In Part I, we highlight key challenges facing night workers who exemplify the precarity and inequality of night work: gig economy food delivery riders, sex workers, migrant domestic care workers, and workers in the broader creative industries.

Focusing on these workers will expand the limited conception of night-work found in government policy discourse, which generally operates with a narrow definition of what and who constitutes the NTE and tends to concentrate on the more formal and better-established occupations.<sup>8</sup> This should in turn create a cross-sectional picture of night work that captures its shifting terrain and which can be used to prevent a deepening of nocturnal inequalities.

In Part II, we propose a series of practical interventions that address the challenges of night work using a prefigurative approach based on the concept of the commons, with the hope of promoting collaboration between night-time workers, unions, planners, and on-the-ground campaigns.

## Rethinking the night-time economy

Recognising and addressing both the challenges faced by night-time workers and the structural inequalities of the NTE involves broadening not only the selection of workers and the types of occupation that we consider to be part of the NTE, but also how we understand work itself within a nocturnal framework.

Traditional approaches to the NTE in government discourse tend to sideline issues of worker welfare and focus instead on economic output, conditions for businesses, opportunities for consumers, and issues relevant to policing and crime.<sup>9</sup> Some of the more recent research has acknowledged issues facing night workers but does not develop any substantial analysis or propositions. London's *24-hour vision* for example,

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8 See for example GLA, 2021b.

9 See for example LGA, 2019.

launched by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan in 2017, promotes strategies to turn London into a leading 24-hour global city but only cursorily mentions worker safety, wages, and workplace rights.<sup>10</sup>

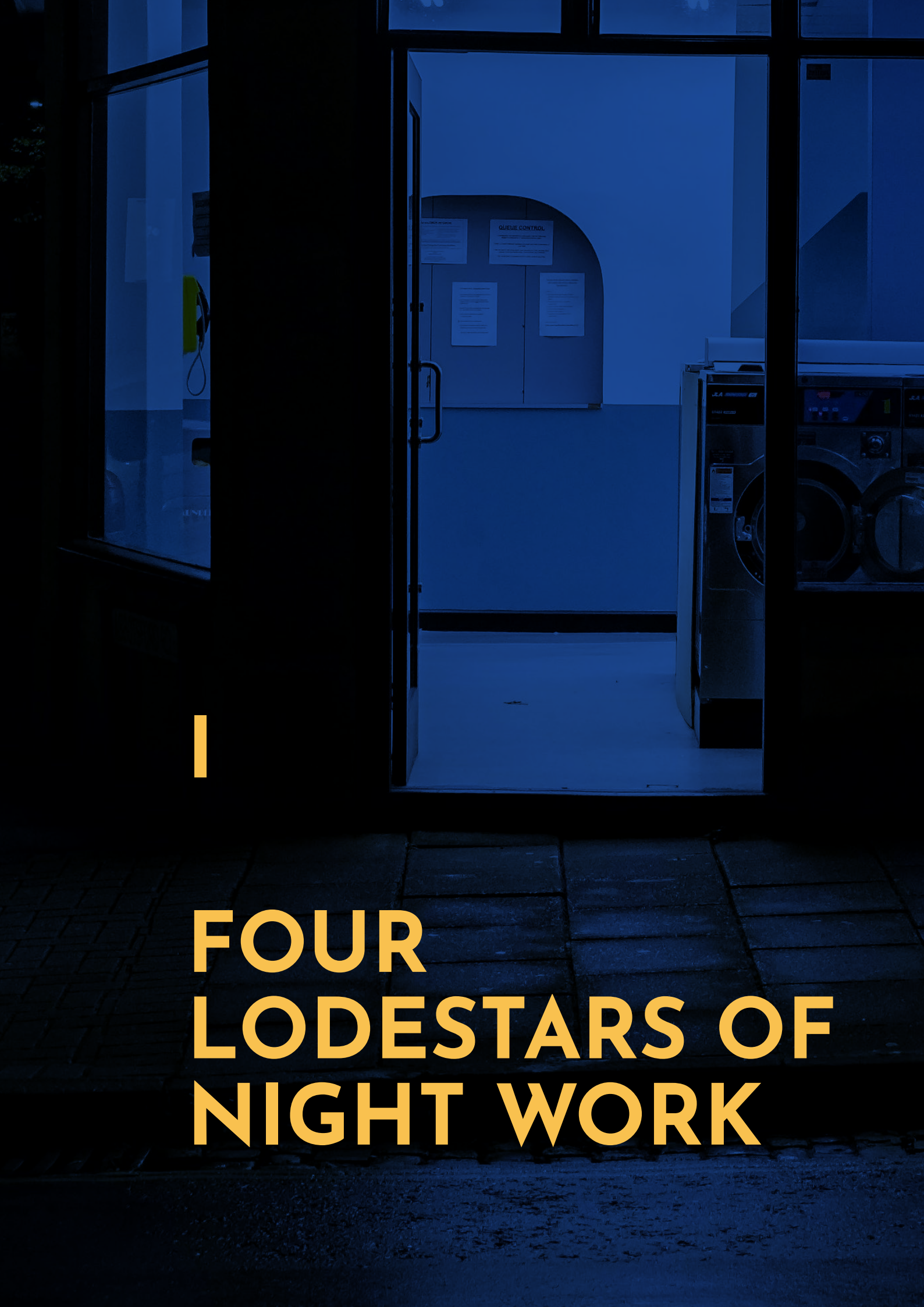
What's more, both traditional and recent approaches share a conception of work which is limited to the paid, productive aspects of labour; that is, work is understood as waged employment which produces goods and services. What this perspective neglects is the socially reproductive labour which also constitutes or supplements work but is unpaid.

The concept of 'reproductive labour' is commonly used to describe the highly gendered activities of unpaid domestic labour and care work. It can also include care work performed for oneself and all the activities performed by workers in order to reproduce their own power to work and maintain their and others' lives.

In the context of the NTE, unpaid reproductive labour involves the care work undertaken by and for night workers and the tasks involved in replenishing their bodies and ability to work, such as childcare, healthcare, resting, eating, and maintaining selves and things. The burden of this reproductive labour generally falls more heavily on night workers than it does on day workers because of the closure of various services and infrastructure at night and because certain types of workers are pushed into the informal economy. To tackle the inequalities of the night we need to rethink the NTE in a way that centres on the issue of nocturnal reproductive labour and the challenges it presents to precarious night workers.

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<sup>10</sup> GLA, 2017a and GLA, 2021a, pp. 303-304.



I

# FOUR LODESTARS OF NIGHT WORK

## Four Lodestars of Night Work

The four types of worker we have focused on here each draw out this link between social reproduction, precarity, and the night as it bears on different parts of the labour economy that are either emerging, overlooked, or in crisis. They are in this way taken as the lodestars of night work which allow us to navigate the changing NTE.

**Gig economy food delivery riders:** The rise of precarious night work is partly due to the changing nature of the labour economy, where platform technology companies in the gig economy like Uber and Deliveroo are at the forefront of the precarisation of work. Food delivery riders - whose peak hours are in the evening and who increasingly work late-night shifts - typify this development, working as independent contractors who lack employment rights and are paid a piece rate.

**Sex workers:** Sex work is rarely included in the NTE, but there are an estimated 72,800 sex workers in the UK and working at night is common.<sup>11</sup> The criminalisation of aspects of sex work pushes workers firmly into the informal economy, denying them employment rights and encouraging exploitative working arrangements, with little or no recourse to institutional or legal support.

<sup>11</sup> Brooks-Gordon, Mai, Perry, and Sanders, 2015.

**Migrant domestic care workers:** Across the whole of the UK, most of the increase in night work since 2014 has been driven by care workers,<sup>12</sup> and care work is the occupation with the most people active at night with 406,000<sup>13</sup> majority women workers.<sup>14</sup> Migrant domestic care workers in particular are, however, like sex workers, customarily left out of analyses of the NTE though they can work long hours through day and night and are often vulnerable to mistreatment by employers.

**Warehouse and retail workers:** 1.2 million people do shift work in warehouse, retail, transport and storage industries, or approximately 5% of the working population in the UK. Jobs in or for warehouses and retailing are among the most precarious for workers. Looking at the high proportions of precarious shift work that characterise these industries, we can talk of a 'precarity-night work nexus' for warehouse and retail workers.

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12 Ibid.

13 TUC, 2020a.

14 TUC, 2019a.

## Food delivery riders

The term 'gig economy' describes labour markets in which contingent work is mediated by digital platforms.<sup>15</sup> Workers are typically classified as self-employed or independent contractors and do not usually have the employment rights enjoyed by employees in more permanent or traditional work, such as sick pay and parental leave.

Work in the gig economy is precarious because the hours are not guaranteed and the pay is often low, variable, and on a piece rate. It can include personal services like cleaning and DIY tasks (17% of the gig economy), skilled manual work like plumbing and building (18%), administrative work like data entry and click work (16%), delivery and courier services (9%), driving or taxi services (11%), and other types of work too.<sup>16</sup> Most workers are men (69%), the highest number are aged between 16 and 30 (34%),<sup>17</sup> and 27% are based in London.<sup>18</sup>

The gig economy is an increasingly significant and transformative part of the economy, and its characteristics are becoming more widespread across the whole of the labour market. There are an estimated 1.1 million workers in the gig economy in Great Britain,<sup>19</sup> with the number of people doing some form of work for digital platforms at least once a week having doubled in one survey to 9.6% from 2016 to 2019.<sup>20</sup>

Food delivery drivers consider their work to be a 24-7 job, despite the peak hours being at night. Shifts with one of the companies can start at 6 or 7 AM and end at 3 or 4 AM. Drivers nap during the day to stay afloat financially.

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15 Woodcock & Graham, 2020.

16 RSA, 2017, p. 15.

17 Ibid., p. 18.

18 Ibid., p. 15.

19 Ibid., p. 13.

20 UoH, 2019.

## The gig economy at day and at night

Theoretical approaches to this emergent form of labour have chosen to break the gig economy down in different ways. This can involve, for instance, distinguishing between geographically tethered work in which an app is used to order food or a taxi, and 'cloudwork,' where online freelancers work remotely on tasks like web development or transcription that can be set from anywhere in the world.<sup>21</sup>

Another option is to recognise both the productive and reproductive aspects of the work, and to then distinguish between the work which occurs in the day and that which occurs at night. So, as well as looking to address the issues of precarity and employment rights which characterise gig work and dominate discussions around worker welfare, we can also ask how the challenges of reproductive labour faced by workers vary depending on whether they are in the diurnal or nocturnal gig economy. Night-workers in the gig economy are essential for the reproduction of the city in two ways. First, they allow for the circulation of goods. Second, they maintain the city by recharging it: night workers recharge the stock of electric bicycles, scooters and cars present in the city.<sup>22</sup>

Taking this approach directs us to those types of gig work which are most likely to be affected by the closure of services and infrastructure at night. As cloudwork can be completed at home, this primarily means geographically tethered workers whose workplaces are effectively public spaces: drivers and cab workers, and delivery and courier riders. Of these two groups of night workers, riders on bicycles and mopeds lack even the shelter and personal space of a car.

Precarious food delivery riders working for platforms like Just Eat, Deliveroo, and UberEats are as such especially exposed to the inequalities of the night. As well as this, their experience of work is defined by perhaps the most novel aspect of the platform-

<sup>21</sup> Woodcock and Graham, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Bojadzijeve and Litschel, 2021.



mediated gig economy: they are managed not by other people but by the algorithm of an app, and this form of labour supervision could likely become more pervasive as labour processes become automated.<sup>23</sup> Food delivery riders working at night are thus doubly instructive: their nocturnal reproductive labour is constantly under strain and they represent an ominous direction of travel for labour markets more broadly.

### Challenges for food delivery riders at night

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| <p><i>Lack of access to common facilities</i></p> | <p>The shifts that riders work vary in both frequency of delivery and the geographical areas covered. At busier times, completing a high number of orders whilst navigating cars, people, and weather is physically and mentally demanding.</p> <p>Between orders and in quieter times, Deliveroo riders, of which there are more than 15,000 in the UK,<sup>24</sup> are encouraged to wait at zone centres to ensure that there are enough riders in the right locations to meet orders when required. Similarly, UberEats riders are pushed towards boost zones where base payment is increased to help meet demand at busier times and places. Riders will often congregate in these zones or at spots near the busier restaurants where they can quickly respond to orders.</p> <p>Riders therefore spend the majority of their working time either on the roads, waiting for food at restaurants and kitchens, or waiting outside in a zone or selected spot. They do not have access to common facilities where they can rest indoors, eat, use toilets, take protection from bad weather, change clothes, store belongings, or charge the phones and bike lights they rely on to take and complete orders.</p> |
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<sup>23</sup> Cant, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Deliveroo, p. 0.

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| <p><i>Closure of daytime services and shops</i></p> | <p>If riders are working late at night, the closure of supermarkets will leave them with few options for food and other necessities. The lack of bike repair facilities normally available during the daytime also means that if bikes are damaged or wheels punctured then riders will be unable to continue working.</p> <p>For both those who work in the gig economy alongside or in supplement to other income streams (32% in a survey by the Department for Business, Energy &amp; Industrial Strategy) and those for whom work in the gig economy is their primary income (8%), the loss of earnings caused by damage to a bike can be significant.<sup>25</sup> This problem is compounded for those migrants who do not have the right to work in the UK and have to manage the additional financial pressure of renting a rider account from someone else for a fee.</p> |
| <p><i>Isolation</i></p>                             | <p>Despite the occasional congregation of riders at zones or spots, riding can be lonely work and workers will often spend long periods in isolation. This is worsened when riders repeatedly receive orders outside a city centre.</p> <p>Deliveroo sometimes employs 'traffic marshals' at the purpose-built kitchen sites - also known as dark kitchens - which provide the food for their 'Editions' service.<sup>26</sup> The marshals are responsible for managing the behaviour and noise of kitchen staff and couriers. This minimises the interaction and community between riders waiting to collect orders.</p>  |

<sup>25</sup> BEIS, 2018, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Deliveroo, p. 8.

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| <i>Safety</i> | <p>At night, Cars drive faster and more erratically. On busy nights such as weekends, special events or football games, roads are not safe and crowds can constitute a problem. At night or early in the morning, drivers experience risk of assault.</p> <p>Mechanical problems occurring late at night can be a disaster, as transport options are limited. Whether related to bikes or mopeds, companies refuse to support drivers facing mechanical problems.</p>  |
| <i>Apps</i>   | <p>Routing. Apps provide potentially dangerous and inaccurate routes at night, as they rely on generic mapping services such as Google, which is notoriously bad at safe routes in the name of efficiency. Couriers are often recommended to travel along deserted canal pathways, woodlands, parks that have gates closed at night and areas that don't make drivers feel safe.</p> <p>Ghost orders. Apps will occasionally give ghost orders - orders that have either been fulfilled already or were never fulfilled and keep bouncing from courier to courier. Ghost orders are often late at night or early in the morning: a rider will arrive to a deserted restaurant for no pay and with potential anti-social behaviour in the area.</p> |

## Sex workers

Sex work encompasses a wide variety of commercial sexual services and can be categorised in a number of different ways: by location - whether it is based indoors, for instance in a brothel, or outdoors on the street; by type of mediation - if it is marketed and arranged digitally or through more analogue forms such as other people or street markets; by type of employment - self-employed independent escorting, for example, or escorting via an agency; and by the services offered - either direct, meaning in-person, or indirect, which includes virtual services like webcamming.<sup>27</sup>

It is estimated that there are 32,000 sex workers in London and 41,000 across the rest of the UK.<sup>28</sup> Around two thirds or more are women.<sup>29</sup> Whilst selling and buying sex are not illegal in the UK, many of the accompanying activities, such as soliciting in public or brothel-keeping, are, and criminalisation creates issues with police and criminal justice and makes sex work more precarious.

Some workers register as self-employed but most sex work takes place in the informal economy, where workers lack employment rights and work-related provisions. This encourages exploitative employment arrangements with third parties - even more so for migrant workers with uncertain immigration status and no recourse to public funds - and has, for example, left sex work in general particularly vulnerable to the absence of state support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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27 Harcourt and Donovan, 2005.

28 NUM.

29 Brooks-Gordon, Mai, Perry, and Sanders, 2015.

## The criminalisation of the night and spatial inequality

The illegality of public soliciting and brothel-keeping prevent the creation of legalised sexual infrastructure for both solicitation and provision, forcing outdoor workers to use public space as part of their workplace. In this way, physical, informal, nocturnal economic spaces are created which are then policed - a process that is dovetailed by approaches to the NTE which aim to make the night a major site of consumption and tourism by reducing crime.

The criminalisation of aspects of sex work as a particular form of nocturnal labour is thus part of a process by which governments seek to transform and regulate the night itself through control of its space.

The effects of this approach are less than optimal, as they impact the safety and health of sex workers as well as their ability to access support services. Surveys conducted by the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) found that being exposed to repressive policing practices and criminalisation made sexual or physical violence three times more likely, contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections twice as likely, and that sex workers were 1.5 times more likely to have sex with a client without a condom.<sup>30</sup> Laws against soliciting and communication in public places for the purposes of sex work disrupt the workplaces and safety strategies of sex workers.<sup>31</sup> Whether indoors or outdoors, this means reduced opportunities to screen clients, work together, and share information. The Global Commission on HIV and the Law notes:

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30 NSWP, 2019

31 Human Dignity Trust, 2015

Criminalization makes it difficult and dangerous for sex workers to organize collectively to improve their working conditions. Denial of labor rights and fundamental civil entitlements such as public education, housing, healthcare, and police protection deepens sex workers' economic instability and social marginalization. In some countries, sex workers are not recognized as full persons under the law and are, thus, unable to own property, register the births of their children, access education, bring legal claims, or open accounts with bank or public utilities.<sup>32</sup>

The UNAIDS-Lancet Commission calls for the forging of 'new paths to uphold human rights and address criminalisation, stigma, and discrimination'. In a 2015 paper they are clear on what is required:

Practical solutions are needed to expedite changes in the laws, policies, and public attitudes that violate the human rights of vulnerable populations who might be at particular risk of HIV infection, such as women, sex workers, MSM, transgender people, injecting drug users, prisoners, and migrants. UNAIDS and its co-sponsors should redouble their efforts in this respect. Work at local level is key to increase inclusivity and community involvement. The creation of safe service havens for marginalised and vulnerable groups at high risk of HIV is a crucial step to ensure that no one is denied access to health care and HIV prevention.<sup>33</sup>

By effectively denying workers a workplace in certain settings, criminalisation embeds a spatial inequality into the NTE which is then managed through the criminal justice system. As a result, the needs of sex workers, the problems of their reproductive labour and the challenges they face are excluded from urban night-time policy.

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32 The Global Commission on HIV and the Law, 2013, p.2.

33 UNAIDS-Lancet Commission, 2015, p. 173.

## Challenges for sex workers at night

The working patterns of sex workers are highly variable. Independent escorts can work one booking every few months or every day,<sup>34</sup> and those working in managed brothels often work shifts ranging from 6 to 24 hours once a week or every day.<sup>35</sup> This work can occur during the day and the night but, for those who do operate nocturnally, the particular challenges of reproductive labour that they face will depend on the type and pattern of their engagement.

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| <p><i>Lack of access to basic provisions and facilities</i></p> | <p>Digitally mediated work is becoming increasingly common and most sex work is now advertised and arranged online, creating a newer set of risks such as online harassment (which can then become physical) and problems with privacy.<sup>36</sup></p> <p>However, outdoor workers still constitute a significant minority at around 28% of all sex workers.<sup>37</sup> Generally their peak soliciting hours are in the evenings and early mornings when clients are travelling to and from work or have themselves finished a night shift.<sup>38</sup> Because their workplace is public space and outreach services are only available at certain hours throughout the night, it is much harder for them than indoor workers to access both basic provisions like food, drink and condoms, and basic facilities like a kitchen, toilets, rest space, somewhere to temporarily store money, and a place to change clothes before and after shifts.<sup>39</sup></p> |
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34 UoB, 2019, p. 28.

35 Ibid., p. 26.

36 Sanders, Scoular, Campbell, Pitcher, and Cunningham, 2018, p. 2.

37 Pitcher, 2015, p. 88.

38 UoB, 2019, p. 31.

39 Jeal and Salisbury, 2008.

*Isolation  
and safety*

The migration of sex work online has changed not only how workers advertise and interact with clients, but also how they interact with other workers. Peer networks and forums are now available which allow them to share support, whereabouts, and information on safety, locations, and clients.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, isolation remains an issue for many workers - both direct and indirect as well as digitally mediated.<sup>41</sup> Whilst digital platforms have made it easier for touring workers moving across the country to temporarily share premises with others, the illegality of this practice still strongly discourages workers from normalising sharing and making sex work safer.

Outdoor workers are also forced to work separately to avoid indicating to police that they are soliciting, making the work more isolating and dangerous. The risks can be greater both when there are fewer other people around during night hours and because the visibility of street work in public space that workers do not control exposes them to harassment.

40 Sanders, Scoular, Campbell, Pitcher, and Cunningham, 2018.

41 Ibid., p. 8.



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| <p><i>Closure and availability of service provisions and childcare</i></p> | <p>Poverty resulting from austerity and punitive Universal Credit measures have increased the number of sex workers in the UK.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, funding cuts have over the last decade led to the closure of many services for sex workers which provided specific support for healthcare, as well as more holistic support for mental health, drop-in services, and outreach.<sup>43</sup> That these services are dwindling and generally available only during the day makes it harder for night sex workers to find support if they need it, for instance in navigating bureaucracy or dealing with domestic violence.</p> <p>A worker representative told Autonomy that healthcare was a priority for sex workers, particularly relating to drug use and dependency, and that the nocturnal and ad hoc nature of the work makes it difficult for workers to fit appointments around working hours.</p> <p>Working at night and early mornings also makes childcare harder. Although the data on the caring responsibilities of sex workers is not comprehensive, existing work suggests that many have children to support,<sup>44</sup> and this care is problematised if they work when schools and childcare services are closed or they take a booking at short notice.</p> |
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42 ECP, 2019.

43 Davies, 2018.

44 ECP.

## Migrant domestic care workers

Care work can be understood as the work that goes into supporting the physical and emotional needs of people, such as children, those with disabilities, and the elderly. It can be direct, involving face-to-face personal care activities, and indirect, including household work like cleaning and cooking.<sup>45</sup> Both direct and indirect care work can be unpaid and paid, with the former commonly taking place in the household and the latter varying in physical location and employment conditions.

There are 1.49 million workers in the adult social care sector in the UK.<sup>46</sup> 685,000 (42%) work in residential care homes and the same number work in domiciliary care such as supported living.<sup>47</sup> 83% are women, 25% are over 55 years old, 21% are BAME, 8% are EU nationals (115,000), and 9% are non-EU workers (134,000).<sup>48</sup>

The adult social care sector is highly privatised - 78% of the workforce work in independent settings<sup>49</sup> - and this has led to increasingly precarious conditions for workers. 58% of domiciliary care workers are on zero-hour contracts<sup>50</sup> and, because agencies are not required to pay them for travel between visits, they are often paid less than the legal minimum wage.<sup>51</sup> Over 7 in 10 care workers are earning less than £10 an hour.<sup>52</sup>

## Migrant domestic care workers at night

More care workers than any other profession work at night, with 406,000 night workers in the caring personal services.<sup>53</sup> This can take place in residential care homes but also domiciliary settings, where much of the live-in work is performed by migrant domestic and care workers. Between 16,000 and 19,000 Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) visas are granted each year and many migrant care workers

45 ILO, 2018, p. 6.

46 SfC, 2019, p. 7.

47 Ibid., p. 26.

48 Ibid., p. 9.

49 Ibid., p. 25.

50 Ibid., p. 8.

51 TUC, 2020b, p.6.

52 TUC, 2020c.

53 TUC 2020a.

work officially in this way as domestic workers in private households.<sup>54</sup>

This fact, combined with the common failure of employers to distinguish between the tasks of care and domestic work, means that live-in domiciliary care workers are often expected to take on the workloads of both roles.<sup>55</sup> As care receivers in homes tend to be elderly people whose needs are not restricted to the daytime, live-in care workers can consequently work long hours around the clock.

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54 Joyce, 2019, p. 3.

55 Kalayaan, 2009.

## Challenges for live-in migrant care workers

### *Isolation and confinement*

The needs of care receivers, exploitative conditions, and the double workload of care and domestic work can restrict the lives of live-in migrant care workers to the homes they work in. For those who have only recently arrived in the UK, this isolation may be compounded by the lack of a social network.

In some cases, isolation can become confinement. As outlined in a report from the University of York and The Voice of Domestic Workers, when working conditions are poor enough to qualify ODW visa holders as trafficked workers then they can be referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and, if successful, they can apply to extend their visa for up to two years.<sup>56</sup> If the competent authority concludes that there are reasonable grounds to the referral whilst the worker's visa is still valid then they are able to continue working until a final decision is reached.

If, however, the initial decision is given after the expiration of the original six-month visa, ODW holders cannot work and are instead provided with subsistence payments by the government. As final NRM decisions might in some cases take years to reach, workers can be pushed into undocumented work where they can be confined to a household and pressured into working longer, possibly unpaid hours with little rest or time off, and sometimes without even a suitable place to sleep.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Joyce, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Kalayaan, 2020.

**Employment rights and advice**

Live-in care work is often arranged through homecare providers who either employ workers directly or act as agencies for care receivers or their families, who are the primary employers. Whilst this type of mediation entails its own difficulties, live-in care work becomes more precarious when it is arranged less formally through ODW visas. These do not allow workers recourse to public funds, meaning they cannot access the furlough scheme, Statutory Sick Pay, or Universal Credit.<sup>58</sup>

ODWs also encourage exploitative working and living conditions for migrant care workers because residency is linked to employment, making it harder for workers to assert their labour rights and resist excessive employer demands.<sup>59</sup> It is easier still for employers to exploit undocumented workers as they have no employment rights at all and risk deportation if they seek official redress.

Yet even if they do have the right to work in the UK, live-in migrant carers can still have difficulty accessing information and advice about their employment rights. This can be because of the complexity of arrangements between agencies, employers and local authorities, confusion around employment status, language barriers, or a lack of familiarity with UK regulations.<sup>60</sup>

58 Ibid.

59 Joyce, 2019.

60 Kalayaan, 2009.

## Warehouse and retail workers

The wholesale, retail, transport and storage industries present similar challenges and conditions for workers. Between the points of production and end sale, goods need to travel along complex commodity chains before they are stacked in warehouses and shops, and then sold. Essential to this global economy are shop assistants stacking shelves and people working in airports, ports, and warehouses, facilitating the circulation of commodities. To guarantee a constant - although non-linear - flow of goods, warehouse and retail workers are subject to long shifts and precarious contracts, as they are often hired on ad-hoc bases, following seasonal changes or busier periods like the holiday season.

National statistics from 2021 indicate that over 5 million people work in retail and logistics, with 3.8 million people in 'Wholesale, retail & repair of motor vehicles' and 1.5 million people in 'transport & storage'.<sup>61</sup> The wholesale and retail business is one of the UK's top industries, and retailers employ a substantial number of young people and women on low income. It is among the largest industries in the UK economy for female and part-time employment, paired with a high density of young workers and low levels of unionization.<sup>62</sup> The retail sector's economic output was £97 billion in 2020, 5.2% of the UK's total economic output.<sup>63</sup>

The gross value added of the transportation and storage sector in the United Kingdom is among the fastest growing industries and reached £68 billion in 2020. Workers employed in transport and storage represent almost 5% of the total UK workforce in 2021. Strongly relying on migrant labour, the transport & storage sector is experiencing severe recruitment challenges post-Brexit and during Covid-19. At the same time, the industry provided the largest upward contribution to services price inflation, the changes

61 ONS, 2021.

62 Lynch et al., 2009.

63 Hutton and Rhodes, 2021.

in prices charged for services provided to UK-based customers.

A Savills report for 2021 indicates a 32% increase in the number of warehousing units since 2015. The growth is led by a tendency where occupiers shift towards larger warehouses. While the number of high street shops declined, the UK registered a staggering 242% increase in units of 1 million square feet or more. The UK is also witnessing a drastic shift in the profile of the businesses using warehouses. Since 2015, internet retailers grew warehouse occupancy by 614%, and third party logistics are now the top occupier of warehouses, with a 42% increase in occupancy.<sup>64</sup>

## Warehouse and retail workers at day and at night

The sheer number of warehouse and retail workers doing shift work is remarkable. Between wholesale, retail, transport and storage, there are 1.2 million people doing shift work, which represents nearly 5% of the entire working population in 2017.<sup>65</sup> Shift work patterns are diverse, but for these industries it normally ranges from 'three-shift working' (84,751 workers)<sup>66</sup> and 'sometimes nights and sometimes days' (115,420) to 'night shift' (254,589) and 'two-shift system'<sup>67</sup> (380,078).

Transport and storage workers top the list of industries where shift work is most prominent, representing the 37.7% of all employed in their sector, while for wholesale and retail the figure is 22.6%, the third largest after health and social work.

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64 Savills, 2021.

65 ONS, 2018.

66 An extra night shift added to two successive shifts ('earlies' and 'lates') in a double-day shift system giving three rotating shifts.

67 Two successive shifts ('earlies' and 'lates'), usually 6am-2pm followed by 2pm-10pm.

Men doing shift work in transport and storage represent 39.7% of all those employed in the sector, whilst in the case of women the figure is 29.4%, almost one out of three. For wholesale, retail and repair of vehicles, the figures are 23.6% and 21.5% respectively, with more than one out of five workers in these industries working at night.

### Challenges for warehouse and retail workers at night

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <p><i>Precarity of shift work</i></p> | <p>The sector is known to use temporary work agencies (TWAs) to operate in areas where unemployment is high. Large companies like Amazon, which will employ 55,000 people in the UK by 2021, use this form of temporary labour extensively. In terms of pay, Amazon advertises roles for £12.11 (with a £1.71 Night Shift Allowance) per hour for night time shifts. Trade union membership in warehouses is low, at 29%. The relatively low number of union membership contrasts with the urgent need to improve working conditions.</p> <p>A study about a logistics warehouse in Swansea highlights that Amazon opens its centres in areas marked by long-term unemployment and de-industrialisation.<sup>68</sup> The internet giant operates in tandem with temporary work agencies and job centres to offer precarious contracts. Considering the double link between the high proportions of shift work and precarious contracts that characterise these industries, we can talk of a 'precarity-shift work nexus'.</p> |
|---------------------------------------|--|



*12-hour shifts  
by migrant  
workers*

The NTE is heavily dependent on migrant manual workers doing the so-called 12-hour shift, a common arrangement for businesses to offer fewer shifts, but with detrimental effects on health and safety.

An ethnographic study of New Spitalfields, London's largest fruit and vegetable market, exposed the reality of many night workers in warehouses: migrants work six nights per week, with shifts of 10 to 16 hours. As warehouses expect on-demand business schedules, fruits and vegetables for the city are transported by precarious migrant drivers too. The catering staff serving night time workers are also predominantly female and often have a migrant background. They are also more subject to abuse than men and are paid less.<sup>69</sup>

69 MacQuarie, 2019.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Health conditions and sleep</i></p> | <p>Individual and community well-being are dependent on sleep, with partial sleep loss having negative health and safety implications. Across the UK, time poverty and poor work-life balance are connected to sleep deprivation.<sup>70</sup></p> <p>Sleep deprivation is also linked to age-related chronic disorders, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, as well as weakened immunological responses and self-reported poor health. Shift work has been linked to physical and emotional stress, which can affect workers' cardiovascular risk and psychological well-being.<sup>71</sup> Workers who work shifts have a higher risk of cancer because their circadian cycles are disrupted.<sup>72</sup></p>                |
| <p><i>High staff turnover and</i></p>     | <p>Retail is an industry dominated by very poor working conditions: it is low-paid and very precarious. Its workforce is predominantly non-unionised. The insecure nature of these jobs, as well as long working hours, shift work, and poor compensation, all contribute to significant turnover and unhappiness among employees. Long hours dissatisfy older workers, while a lack of professional opportunities dissatisfies younger workers, mostly students on part-time flexible contracts.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>For these reasons, retail businesses experience challenges recruiting and retaining employees. The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) estimates average staff turnover in retailing as around 62%.</p> |

70 Chatzitheochari and Arber, 2009; Green, 2001.

71 Lecca et al., 2018.

72 Ijaz et al. 2013; Schernhammer et al., 2013; Viswanathan et al. 2007.

73 Whysall et al., 2009.



II

**MUNICIPAL  
STRATEGIES  
FOR A  
DEMOCRATIC  
NIGHT-TIME  
ECONOMY**  
policy  
interventions

## Municipal strategies for a democratic night-time economy: policy interventions

This section outlines the steps of a municipal strategy that centres workers at the core of a new approach to the night-time economy. The aim is to build more equal cities, by fostering practices of community between people who work at night. Cities should prioritise investment in social, and indeed basic, infrastructures that benefit workers of the night in the first place.

Policy frameworks addressing cities at night often fail to appreciate the crucial and yet precarious nature of night-time work. Approaches centred on multi-stakeholder governance to improve the management of a 24/7 economy overlook the root causes of inequalities embedded in night-work. These understandings of night-time in cities tend to be concerned with opportunities to create value and neglect the specific functions served by workers of the night, the conditions of their labour and the barriers to care and renewal that they face.

In this section, we propose city strategies that reverse the exploitative practices and onerous burdens which dominate/characterise night-time economies, with a focus on creating new spaces of freedom and care for night workers. This approach to fostering equality in the night-time economy is based on the values of economic democracy and municipalism. The section considers new paths and practical steps for building municipal urban governance and better night work.

We identify three areas of intervention, which taken together constitute the basis of a municipal strategy for democratising the night-time economy. These areas establish a grid of collaboration between communities, workers and local authorities.

The different elements of this municipal strategy are corroborated by two sets of proposals: policy proposals and proposed foundational infrastructures. The first part sets out proposals aimed at democratising the night-time economy. The foundational infrastructures prefigure a model of co-ownership and democratic governance that can provide services for precarious, vulnerable and atomised workers at night.

## 6 ideas to bolster the night-time economy

This section discusses policies to further democratise the night. A lot of the issues of inequalities related to night-time are driven by discourses and stories about economic democracy. The problem is that the night is not democratic enough.

What are the alternatives to revert the exploitation of night-time workers and democratise the night-time economy? At the beginning of this intervention, three key problems were listed: the specific temporalities of night-work put workers at a high risk of being exploited; policy frameworks centred on the management of a 24/7 economy overlook the root causes of inequalities embedded in night-work; while night-time workers reproduce the city, they are also more precarious and lower paid.

This research referred to economic democracy as both a problem of equality- of the exploitative nature of work carried out at night<sup>74</sup>- and as a problem of agency, of the power that workers have in shaping the environment in which their work takes place. The expansion of night-time economies and consequent exploitation of night-time work is unevenly impacting workers, and, as a result, is increasing inequalities and undermining urban democracy. The disproportionate prevalence of night workers in poorly paid and precarious jobs indicate the need for urgent action: to address inequalities of work, cities must meet the demands of night-time workers in the first place.

Democratising the night can thus be seen as one of the struggles against the erosion of the right to the city.

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<sup>74</sup> The Union TUC has a list of recommendations for nighttime workers available at. Our list of policies complement and integrate this list. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/AHardDaysNight.pdf>

Below, we suggest action points that address this lack and explain how these propositions expand the agency of night workers in shaping the city.

### 1. Establish 'Night Work Assemblies'

Local councils could oversee the formation of iterative and localised democratic structures such as Night Work Assemblies to enable democratic control over the spaces and infrastructures that house night-time activities. A network of borough-level night-time assemblies can be set up and the resulting decisions of these initiatives might render the Night-Time Commission and non-elected night mayors superfluous.

Even though oversight, involvement and base-level resources from local governments would be essential to the success of these structures, these would need to be autonomous from national and local government.

### 2. Establish a 'Night Workers Equity Commission' to advise city-regions

Regional bodies should ensure that night-time workers have equal access to participate in the decisions that affect them. A Night Work Equity Commission could take on this responsibility, with delegates from Night Work Assemblies being able to join and inform its work. This commission would be involved in shaping documents like the GLAs 'London Plan' to ensure that night-time workers can feed into all urban transformations that impact and affect the night. A possible model for this could be 'The Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm' set up by the Mayor of London to advise the GLA.<sup>75</sup>

### 3. Apply community-centred frameworks for

## governing and developing Night Time Economies locally

In order to democratise the night, cities and councils should prioritise **worker-led community wealth building**. With community wealth building, we refer to a model of development focussed on the local economy to generate economic multipliers.<sup>76</sup> Municipal strategies to create local circuits of wealth play a critical role in enabling community-based and worker-led wealth building.<sup>77</sup> Community control is also an opportunity to rethink approaches to safety and anti-social behaviour, developing alternatives to unjust zero tolerance policies. These frameworks could instead encourage damage reduction policies, housing the activity of legal observers and mental health workers.

### 4. Enforce a 'Night Time Living Wage'

It is not uncommon for work performed at night to command higher wages. This should be true across the board. Adapting the London Living Wage, currently set at £10.85, and going beyond it, a Night-Time Living Wage would reflect the higher costs of working at night. This economic instrument ensures that workers, carers and their families can afford to be reliant on work performed at night. Cities should promote their enforcement, incentivising businesses to pay their employees the Night-Time Living Wage. A Night Time Living Wage would account for the added costs of working at night, including the lack of affordable childcare outside of 'normal' working hours, the negative health effects of irregular sleeping patterns, the cost and time associated with reduced commuting options.

### 5. Establish 'Night Funds' to leverage

<sup>76</sup> CLES, 2016; McInroy et al., 2017.

<sup>77</sup> McInroy, 2018; CLES, 2018.



## resources for Public-Commons-Partnerships

Public authorities and workers' organisations should collaborate to set up dedicated Night Funds that can support nocturnal activities and social spaces for night-time wellbeing, with the establishment of night worker centres as pivotal to this effort (see below). These 'Night Funds' should capture part of the profits generated by companies that rely on night work for their success - be they platforms that organise gig-work or logistics-heavy businesses like supermarkets. This levy would function as an acknowledgement of the responsibility these companies have in shaping the experiences and conditions of night workers.

### 6. Move towards applying community-based frameworks to regulating the night

Public authorities and commons organisations should collaborate to set up policing frameworks that move beyond carceral and punitive approaches without compromising safety. At their core, community-based frameworks would see partial, or complete, devolution of power from the police to trained and remunerated members of local resident and worker communities. Such frameworks would include piloting non-enforcement areas in designated parts of the city or the creation of autonomous 'awareness teams' - as pioneered in Austrian and German cities;<sup>78</sup> . These initiatives include supporting the patrols of legal observers and other means for ensuring accountability for 'traditional' policing practices. Changing area-specific policing in this way is suggested as a way of building trust, community and reducing the surplus harms that can be produced in sometimes fractious relations between police and neighbourhoods.

III

**MUNICIPAL  
STRATEGIES  
FOR A  
DEMOCRATIC  
NIGHT-TIME  
ECONOMY**  
spaces and  
services

Cover  
Techn

## **Municipal strategies for a democratic night-time economy: spaces and services**

The second part of the strategy proposes acting on the very terrain where experiences of vulnerability, isolation and lack of acknowledgement proliferate: the city at night. Many of the challenges faced by night workers are related to the lack of infrastructure and access to services. This section lays out the plans for a network of spaces and services that can support workers in a democratic and inclusive environment. Rather than a public service or a set of businesses, the proposal prefigures community stewardship and worker control: the nocturnal commons.

### **Building the nocturnal commons: foundational infrastructures for the night**

Night-time economies expand on the backs of workers routed into exhausting, precarious jobs.<sup>79</sup> While workers of the night keep the economy running, they also experience limited access to a wide range of infrastructures offered by the city. Thus, democratising the night-time economy by building public-common partnerships is instrumental to improve the wellbeing and welfare of night-time workers. Facilitating this greater participation in the NTE will require sites of congregation. In turn, the process of congregation will be most effective if core, practical needs are front

79 MacQuarie, 2021.

and centre: the following network of infrastructures is premised on the co-location of everyday 'reproductive tools' - from changing rooms to 24 hour child care - with spaces also designed for trade union activity and long term worker support.

Community ownership and worker management are not only instrumental to a longer term project of democratisation of work and the city: on the ground, ensuring that even the most vulnerable workers can be reached will also depend on a clear separation from state and council authorities. With an approach rooted in practices of space-commoning,<sup>80</sup> this strategy articulates one possible scenario of how this network could be owned and managed.

The proposal also speculates on the shape that support and involvement from local and regional governments could take. Making space for the reproductive needs of workers as well as their ability to organise together should be a central concern of municipal and public bodies: the infrastructures and services proposed in this paper prefigure what a public partnership with an association of night commoners would look like. In view of these multiple forms of need among night workers, we thus propose the creation of a complex three-part infrastructural space as described below.

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80 Stavrides, 2016.

## Defining the nocturnal commons

Nocturnal commons are spaces and services offered to night-time workers for free. They involve the establishment of infrastructures that can meet the needs and aspirations of night-time workers of various kinds. A worker centre to build nocturnal commons functions across five dimensions:

1. Nocturnal commons are built for a **community** of night-time workers.
2. Nocturnal commons are non-commodified **common pool resources and services** for workers of the night.
3. Nocturnal commons are **spaces** where night-time workers meet, socialise and rest.
4. Nocturnal commons improve the **wellbeing** of night-time workers and their community.
5. Nocturnal commons can **democratise** the night-time economy by sharing resources and leveraging collaborative practices.

These five elements represent what nocturnal commons can do for a growing network of night-time workers. The model outlined in this section is geared towards enabling workers of the night to govern processes of community wealth building where they live and work. Thanks to their lived experience, night-time workers have critical capacities to identify which common pool resources and services are needed to transform night-time economies.

## Institutional paths towards the nocturnal commons: public-commons-partnerships

Uniquely positioned to supply public goods, city administrations can play a major role in constructing

nocturnal commons, as part of their efforts to combat urban inequalities.

Strategies to build the commons include collaborations between commons associations and local governments. This is the case, for example, where municipalist initiatives rethink how assets and services can be delivered for the common good. Municipalist approaches have emerged across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East in response to recent initiatives of citizen groups demanding the collaborative construction of urban commons.

In these political experiments, municipal organisations enable processes of urban commons transition led by citizens, activists and workers.<sup>81 82</sup>

In the UK, public commons partnerships (or PCPs) have been theorised as a model for urban commons transition. In the formulation proposed by Milburn and Russell,<sup>83</sup> PCPs are a governance model where cooperatives produce goods and services overseen by a public advisory board, which then re-invests profits in the infrastructures that sustain them. Moving away from public-private partnerships, local councils involved in PCPs act as ‘catalyst’ for the formation of a financially sustainable ‘Commons Association’.

Under a PCP model for nocturnal commons, local councils could provide the foundational infrastructures workers of the night need to rethink how goods and services are produced and distributed at night. More specifically, with the direct support of local councils, PCPs for the night-time economy could:

- Fund worker centres that cater to all workers of the night, especially by responding to these workers’ unmet personal and family needs for rest, replenishment and care.
- Support strategies and initiatives for improving

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81 Micciarelli, 2021

82 Foster et al., 2015

83 Milburn and Russell, 2019.

working conditions of night-time workers in urban communities at night.

- Turn light industrial space or public space into a spatial infrastructure dedicated to night-time workers.

Another element of a PCP for the co-production of nocturnal commons can be the adoption of the *Bologna Regulation for the Care and Generation of the Urban Commons*.<sup>84</sup> This piece of innovative legislation emerged in the Italian city of Bologna to directly sustain self-organised community initiatives under a legislative framework. For example, the *Bologna Regulation* grants legal support for grassroots projects that utilise under-leveraged spaces. By recognising common good efforts of community-led projects, the municipal government provides technical or legal assistance and gives citizens space to work. Issuing ‘pacts of collaboration’, the city government enters into formal contracts with citizen groups active in projects for the common good.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, in the city of Naples, Italy, a tool called ‘Commons Accord’ supports new forms of community and self organization through forms of commoning based on solidarity production. These ‘pacts of collaboration’ between re-imagine the right of property in cities, by providing a legal tool that offers rights of use to community groups squatting abandoned buildings or under-utilised urban space.<sup>86</sup>

These tools enable democratic urban politics that regulate the interactions between citizens, workers and local administrations. They also provide principles for collaborative sub-local governance, where workers and local governments manage the city’s urban commons. Overall, pacts of collaborations or commons accords provide grassroots initiatives a support framework that can maintain the commons in the long-term.

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84 Micciarelli, 2021.

85 De Tullio, 2020.

86 Micciarelli, 2021.

### Three infrastructures for night workers

The aim of the proposals in this part of the strategy is not to enable and encourage the precarity of nocturnal occupations, but rather to highlight the most problematic aspects of a 24h city. Rather than rejecting such frameworks, the project proposes an implementation of three service-infrastructure that would produce both constructive criticism of the government's plans for the night and immediate practical solutions for night workers.

The drawn proposals in this section are based on the needs of the 4 lodestar categories of workers identified in the first part of the document: food delivery riders, sex workers, care workers and logistics workers. As such, *24-hour Health Centre*, *24-hour Worker Club* and the *24 hr Rest Stop*, are intended to place emerging issues relating to night work on the urban stage. As such, while providing both health and child care services for night workers, the first infrastructure takes a further step by tackling the question of night workers' well being. The second infrastructure provides a communal space where night workers can engage in communal practices of cultural and political exchange. Finally, the third infrastructure is a form of collective equipment designed to meet the most basic needs for night workers between their shifts.

Though these drawings can be read - and indeed were conceived - as architectural proposals for a specific site (in this case an adaptation of a large intersection in Dalston, East London), it's important to note that these illustrations articulate an ideal scenario - both for the number of different services proposed and in terms of the spatial relations it sets up. In this sense it can also be read as a spatial matrix, with each of the three infrastructures representing a distinct cluster of 24hr activities and services: one dedicated to health, one to rest and one to community and organising.

While the infrastructures display distinctive functions, they should be understood as a network: the *24-hour Worker Club* occupies a strategically located space that



lies at the heart of the whole design. Whilst providing a wide range of services - office space, nocturnal library, canteen, changing rooms, bar etc. - it is through their porous use that night workers and unions can claim collective ownership of the structure. The non-enforcement area defined by the courtyard perimeter is both a device for aggregation night workers *and* a space for local communities. The social space defined by the ground-floor canteen aims at challenging the disunited and individualistic attitude that new forms of labour engender.

### 24 hr Rest Stop: Everyday amenities for workers

The *Rest Stop* addresses the most immediate and tangible issues faced by night workers. With shops and facilities more likely to be closed at night-time and many night workers operating outside, it can be difficult to access places where one can eat, use toilets, rest, shield oneself from bad weather, and store belongings. It is essential for the care of night workers that they have access to these amenities and services. Addressing the most basic of needs in a supportive and informal environment, the *Rest Stop* doubles up as shelter for the most atomised and vulnerable workers and represents a first point of contact to reach them.

#### **Affordable, healthy meals and free hot drinks**

The night food landscape in UK cities is predominantly made up of fast food chains, 'chicken shops' and other unhealthy options. Compared to those working during the day, night workers are far more likely to be exposed to food that will affect their long term health and everyday wellbeing. The more public-facing of the three infrastructures in the strategy, the *Rest Stop*, imagines a cooperative form of 24hr restaurant.

In its most basic formulation, it would offer the opportunity to access hot food and drinks whilst doing away with the exploitative practices and unhealthy eating options of 'traditional' 24 hr fast food establishments. For those working outside, like riders

# 24 hr Rest Stop

- a. ordering
- b. dining
- c. kitchen
- d. lounge
- e. lockers
- f. WC
- g. make-up
- h. changing
- i. showers
- j. sauna
- k. reception
- l. drug consumption
- m. time-out





Hot food and drinks



Make-up and self-care spaces



Locker rooms



Drug consumption room

or in some cases sex workers, hot drinks can represent a primary source of comfort and social exchange. Offering these free of charge or for a donation can attract a wide range of users to the facility.

### **Changing, make up and hygiene**

Many night workers, especially sex workers, lack opportunities to change into their work-clothes as well as store their own. Delivery, hospitality and logistics workers of the night could benefit from **showers, bathrooms, and changing stations.**

### **Safer Drug Consumption Facilities (SDCFs)**

Whether it represents a way of coping with trauma or simply a means to stay awake, drugs are an integral part of the lives of many night workers. A non-judgmental and supportive approach to helping these workers begins with offering space to use safely and reduce harm. SDCFs have slowly established themselves as an alternative to repressive policing practices in cities like Zurich and Barcelona. With over 100 centres across 66 cities worldwide, evidence and support for their benefits is growing. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs & Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the UK based Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs (ACMD)<sup>87</sup> both support the adoption of SDCFs. In its report on these facilities, the EMCDDA concludes that

[t]hey reach a population of long-term problem drug users with various health and social problems. They provide a hygienic environment for drug use and, for regular attenders at least, decrease exposure to risks of infectious diseases. They contribute to a reduction in levels of risk-taking among their clients and increase access for specific 'hard-to reach' target populations of drug users to health, welfare and drug treatment services. They provide immediate emergency help in case of overdose, and can make a contribution to the reduction of overdose deaths at community level.<sup>88</sup>

87 Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 2016.

88 European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2004.

Though in the UK such spaces currently operate illegally, the design includes them as part of a comprehensive scheme, showing the place they could occupy in a progressive strategy for neighbourhoods at night.

## Worker community and power: 24hr Worker Clubs

### Spaces for informal encounter

24hr Worker Clubs should encourage socialising between workers, cultivating a sense of solidarity and community that can reverse the atomising effects of their work. A space explicitly dedicated to night workers is especially important for categories that are undervalued, gendered and atomised, such as carers and those precariously working in hospitality. These centres should also allow for discussion, with workers coming together possibly to share experiences and organise for better working conditions.

Creating a safe and inclusive space is essential in encouraging people to frequent the Worker Club. To this end, the courtyard defines a non-enforcement area. Both labour collective action and sex workers' struggles can be amplified by this condition: safe space means no CCTVs and a policing-free centre to combat police raids, deportations, and arrests - all of which have increased in recent years, as stressed by the English Collective of Prostitutes<sup>89</sup>. Autonomy and peer management are key in challenging the criminalisation of sex work reinforced by moralising narratives, anti-sex trafficking laws and strict immigration policies. The aforementioned model of 'awareness teams'<sup>90</sup> is an example of policing which refuses 'saviour' narratives in favour of self-organisation and worker-led management.

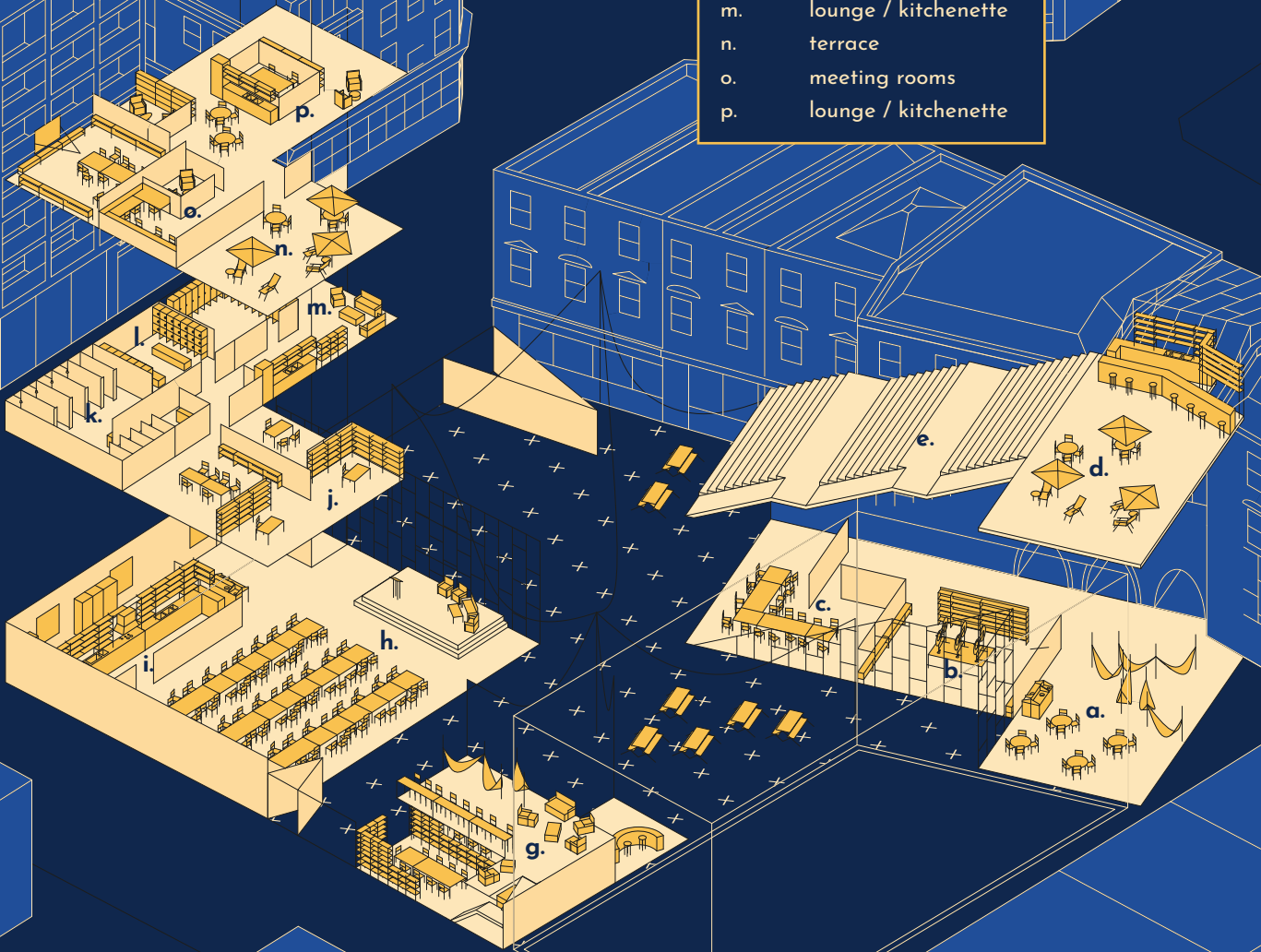
Porous, social space is vital in creating opportunities for unplanned encounters. The steps to the terrace café, for instance, double up as permanent outdoor

89 English Collective of Prostitutes, 2021

90 Raiselis, 2021

# 24 hr Workers Club

- a. quiet area
- b. cycle workshop
- c. meeting room
- d. terrace café
- e. stepping plaza
- f. courtyard
- g. library
- h. assembly and dining
- i. kitchen
- j. meeting rooms
- k. showers
- l. changing
- m. lounge / kitchenette
- n. terrace
- o. meeting rooms
- p. lounge / kitchenette





English language lessons and worker rights workshops



Conviviality and social events



seating that people can use for assemblies and informal socialisation. Anchoring these shared social spaces are amenities and services often unavailable to night workers: toilets, quick bites and warm drinks. Sharing resources and experiences can strengthen the everyday wellbeing, in particular, of workers moving around the city alone, such as drivers and delivery workers.

### **Worker assembly, events and organised leisure**

A key aim of the scheme is allowing workers to meet, increase knowledge about the nature of their job and initiate collective action. Night Worker Clubs should accommodate the needs of worker assembly by providing dedicated spaces for groups of workers to discuss common issues formally and informally. Large meeting rooms allow discussion amongst peers, whilst a dedicated stage area in the cafeteria allows for larger public speeches and meetings. Increased opportunities to meet and share knowledge can help counter emergent forms of exploitation: gig-based delivery platforms like JustEat or Deliveroo as well as platform giants like Amazon, use management algorithms that purposely create information asymmetries between workers and employers. A study conducted in Australia suggests that food delivery workers significantly over-perceive the level of autonomy they enjoy in their job.<sup>91</sup> Worker-led research and exchange amongst gig-economy workers does not need to stop at the gates of each *24 hr Worker Club*. These facilities can serve as a point of connection to similar organizations in other cities, highlighting the algorithmically defined supply chains that unite, for example, hospitality and delivery workers, and delivery workers with logistics drivers.

### **Union activity, organising and worker support**

Workers may face difficulties in accessing services and information that can help support them with their employment and welfare issues. There are many reasons workers may not have access to these services, including language barriers, unfamiliarity with UK regulations, complex working arrangements, or their work schedules.

In particular, more isolated workers, such as live-in carers, could greatly benefit from becoming aware of their rights as workers and tenants. These prescriptions might lend them perspective, by situating them in a broader network of intimacy and affection.

Some of the space in worker centres is allocated long term to specific unions and worker collectives that are of particular interest to night workers. The Centre includes smaller offices and bureaus for one-on-one counselling and deskwork. Unions can have either rotating or permanent desks so that workers have regular and accessible points of contact to get advice on relevant issues. Such issues can include legal and migration matters, employment rights, and partaking in unionisation. Workers can use the meeting rooms for formal discussions.

The larger spaces can support skills and language courses. Following the “X-Talk” project,<sup>92</sup> the centre can offer English classes to support migrant sex workers. The centre should be organised around what sex workers need and will let them participate actively in its activities, rejecting ‘rescuing narratives’.

More practically, the centres could provide materials which allow, for example, live-in caregivers to be more aware of their rights as workers and tenants. These prescriptions might lend them perspective, by situating them in a broader network of intimacy and affection amongst carers.

### **Rest, recreation and quiet space**

Night workers' jobs are physically and emotionally demanding. Care, sex and delivery workers are especially vulnerable to job-related injury, abuse and emotional trauma, particularly if they are migrants. This makes it essential for *24 hr Worker Clubs* to include spaces for rest and relaxation. These can include basic amenities such as showers and lockers, as well as rest and napping areas. A small library could provide a quiet space for reflection

<sup>92</sup> X-Talk is “a sex worker-led workers co-operative which approaches language teaching as knowledge sharing between equals and regards the ability to communicate as a fundamental tool for sex workers to work in safer conditions, to organise and to socialise with each other.” see <http://www.xtalkproject.net/about/>

and internet access – accompanied by IT support. Together, these facilities allow workers to have a safe and quiet space during their downtime. These spaces are also intended to offer an alternative to the often inadequate housing conditions lower income workers are forced to live in, contributing to breaking the fatigue cycle that leads to a survival mentality.

### Spaces and tools for worker wellbeing: 24hr Care and Health Centre

The 24 hr Care and Health Centre addresses inequalities that night workers face when accessing health and care services. Night workers may find that services such as GPs, drug support services, childcare, and other health facilities such as gyms are closed at night. With work schedules that make it difficult to arrange appointments for the day, and facilities closed at night, night workers have a much harder time accessing health services when they need them.

#### Physical and mental health

Though the recent establishment of Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) has expanded health services available at night, these are mainly intended for emergencies. In addition to walk-ins, 24 hour health centres would instead offer regular medical appointments at times that are convenient for workers - truly turning the city into a 24hr space. Partnerships with NHS trusts and local authorities would be key to delivering these services successfully. Partnerships should not come at the expense of creating an environment that remains a safe space for vulnerable workers as they seek advice on treatment, addiction and other health issues.

24hr Care and Health Centres should address the mental health of night workers through counselling. For carers, who are often migrants, such a scheme would also help address the emotional burdens produced by their line of work, as carers report loneliness to be a primary cause of their developing kin-like relations with their employer.<sup>93</sup>

### **Childcare**

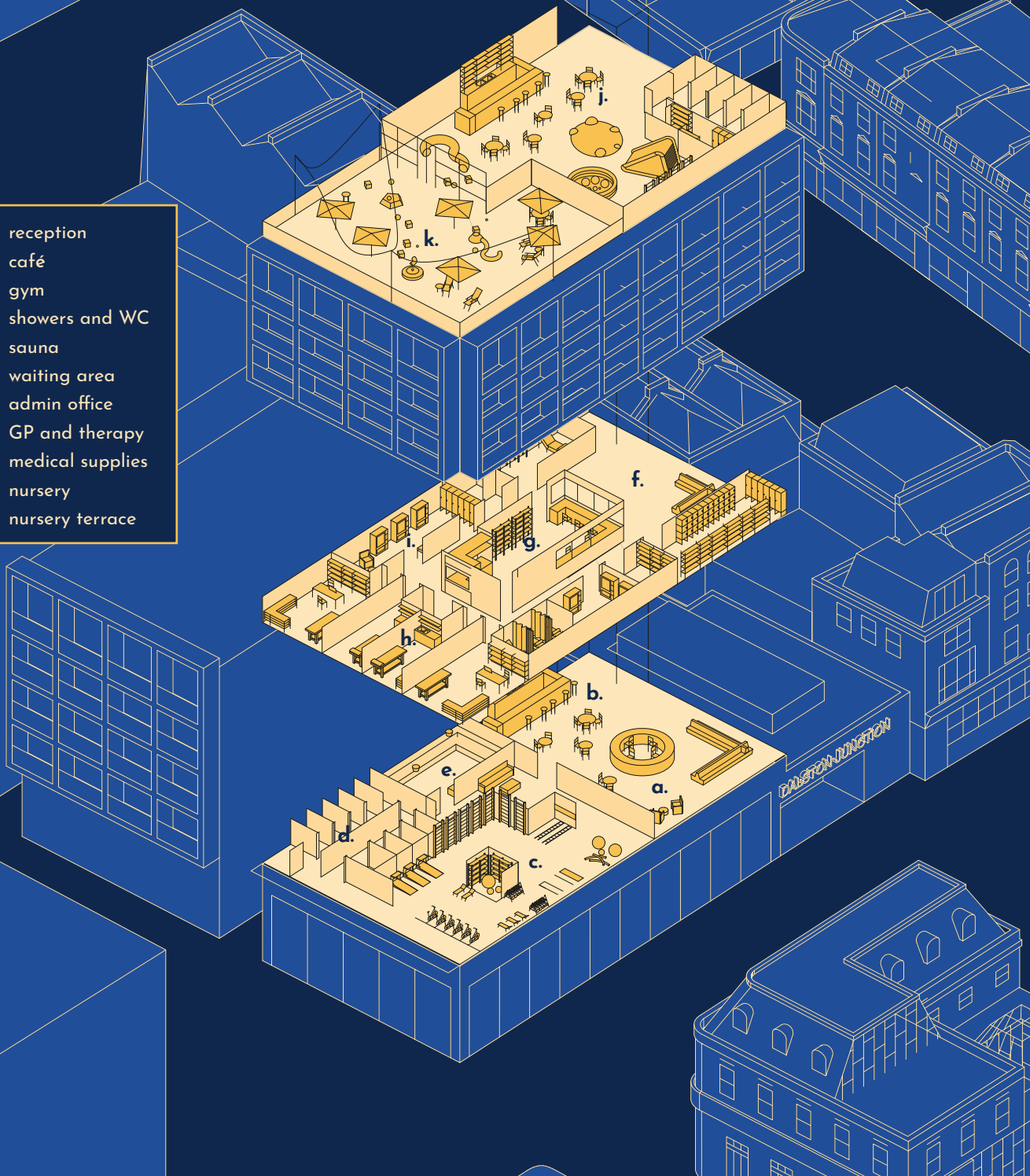
The increase in night work has not been matched by the development of free night-time childcare services. This is made worse by the fact that so many night workers, from carers to sex-workers, are women with caring responsibilities. Migrant workers face even more difficulties, as they are likely to lack the familial support networks that can make a difference. *24 Heath Centres* could offer a 24-hour nursery to accommodate working parents who have atypical working hours and would otherwise find it difficult to arrange childcare at night.

### **Exercise and self-care**

Centres should incorporate spaces of self-care for workers. This includes a nocturnal gym with a wet area and showers. The gym will be able to operate as an independent entity that gives priority to night workers. 24-hour gyms are currently in demand, especially with shift workers and those with atypical working hours, and it is essential to provide a safe and accessible space for people to exercise to look after their mental and physical health.

# 24 hr Worker Care and Health Centre

- a. reception
- b. café
- c. gym
- d. showers and WC
- e. sauna
- f. waiting area
- g. admin office
- h. GP and therapy
- i. medical supplies
- j. nursery
- k. nursery terrace





Regular health checks and GP appointments



24 hr Nursery

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