

Evening and night-time economy (NTE) predatory behaviour disruption partnership

The predatory behaviour disruption partnership aims to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the evening and night-time economy (ENTE) by using civil tools and powers as an early intervention to predatory behaviour.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Anti-social behaviour Community engagement
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Community safety partnership
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	November 2023

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Communities General public Offenders Victims Women

Aim

The partnership is a collaborative initiative between Plymouth City Council and Devon and Cornwall Police, focused on preventing VAWG within the ENTE and supporting women involved in street-based sex work.

The programme aims to use civil tools and legal powers as early interventions to identify and disrupt predatory behaviour to help create safer public spaces and reduce harm before it escalates.

Intended outcome

- reduction in VAWG offences within the ENTE
- early intervention to prevent predatory behaviour escalating into criminal offences
- increased implementation of the intervention where the evidential threshold for prosecution is not met

Description

The ENTE predatory behaviour disruption partnership is a joint initiative between Plymouth City Council and Devon and Cornwall Police, designed to prevent VAWG in the ENTE and support women involved in street-based sex work.

The partnership was inspired by the 2023 launch of Project NightEye, a programme focused on preventing crime by proactively identifying and intervening in instances of predatory sexual

behaviour before they escalate.

Project NightEye led to increased intelligence-gathering, revealing a minority of individuals exhibiting concerning behaviours, not always meeting the threshold for criminal charges, but nonetheless causing women to feel harassed, alarmed, or distressed. These behaviours presented a risk of escalation into criminal offences if left unaddressed.

This intelligence gap highlighted an opportunity to repurpose civil tools and powers under the anti-social behaviour (ASB) escalation process (traditionally used for broader ASB issues) as a means for early intervention against predatory behaviour.

In November 2023, the ENTE predatory behaviour disruption partnership was formally established to:

- review intelligence
- identify individuals suitable for intervention
- apply proportionate civil remedies

The partnership is chaired by the community safety manager and includes:

- community safety team (local authority)
- licensing teams (police and local authority)
- intelligence directorate (police)
- neighbourhood policing
- sexual offences unit
- police deputy lead for sex work vulnerability

The group meets every four weeks to assess reports of predatory behaviour from the preceding month. Each case is reviewed against key criteria:

- is the crime threshold met? – referred for police investigations
- high-risk or high-harm behaviour? – considered for multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA), potentially dangerous persons (PDP), sexual risk orders, or sexual harm prevention orders, led by police
- suitable for early intervention? – considered for anti-social behaviour escalation managed by police and community safety officers

The group monitors emerging trends, such as clusters of incidents at specific venues or wider behavioural shifts in the ENTE.

Individuals identified for intervention are invited to a police station meeting with a Community Safety Officer and Police Officer. Depending on severity, words of advice may be issued and civil tools and powers may be applied, including:

- community protection warnings (CPW)
- community protection notices (CPN)
- civil injunctions
- criminal behaviour orders (CBO)

All powers may include geographical exclusion zones within the city.

Example conditions from a CPW:

You must not:

- Behave in any manner that causes women in public areas within Plymouth to feel harassed, alarmed or distressed. This includes, but is not limited to:
Behaving in an intimidating or threatening manner, exhibiting unwanted attention towards women, making inappropriate comments of a sexually harassing nature towards women, and touching women without their expressed consent.
- Enter any of the area with the exclusion zone on the two attached maps within the times of 8pm to 8am every evening.

Overall impact

The partnership was initially piloted over a 12-month period (November 2023 – November 2024) to assess the effectiveness of its approach in identifying and addressing predatory behaviour within Plymouth's ENTE.

Key outcomes:

- 43 individuals exhibiting predatory behaviour were reviewed, all were male, aged between 22 and 77 years

- 18 individuals were deemed suitable for a joint early intervention led by Plymouth City Council and Devon & Cornwall Police
- none of the individuals 18 met the threshold for criminal investigation and without intervention, their behaviour would likely have gone unchallenged, with the risk of escalation into criminal offences
- following intervention, none of the 18 individuals reappeared in connection with further intelligence logs or crimes linked to predatory behaviour within the ENTE during the pilot period.

Due to the positive impact and demonstrated effectiveness of the partnership's approach, the initiative has continued beyond the pilot phase and is now embedded into business-as-usual operations.

Learning

The force has highlighted the importance of:

- thorough evidence review – always examine body-worn video (BWV) footage, prior logs, crime records, and intelligence before interviewing individuals to ensure a complete understanding
- advance planning – consider language barriers, additional support needs, and accessibility before interviews
- open-minded interviews – be receptive to any submissions made by the individual prior to enforcement decisions
- victim and evidence-led approach – avoid assumptions about how victims may feel, base actions on facts and available evidence
- multi-agency collaboration – involve diverse partners to enhance decision-making and accountability

This work differs from traditional ASB interventions and requires tailored approaches:

- specialist training (for example, via the police MOSOVO team)
- use of appropriate, secure interview locations (for example, police stations)
- heightened focus on staff safety, wellbeing and resilience

The offender characteristics have also been different:

- no set stereotype of offender – range of ages, employment statuses, nationalities
- typically, not linked to alcohol, substance misuse, or mental health triggers
- a combination of those who take accountability for their behaviour, others who see no issue it, and some avoidant or in denial

Next Steps:

- increase victim reporting – explore methods to support victims who may be reluctant to report incidents at the time
- boost public intelligence sharing – provide channels for the public to submit information, especially where victims are not ready to come forward
- knowledge exchange – share learning and processes with other local authority and police force areas
- pursue funding – seek support to develop educational/awareness programmes targeting individuals who display predatory behaviour toward women

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