

NIGHT CLUB

Evidence, progress and learnings in creating a healthier experience of working at night.

FOREWORD

It is the many stories we have heard from the night workers we've met that motivated us to create Night Club and continue to drive our mission today. The engineer who fell asleep at the wheel on his way home. The exhausted hospital porter struggling to combine shift work and childcare. The logistics worker who Night Club helped tackle her energy drink habit. The bus driver who discovered meditation.

We founded Night Club because millions of people working at night deal with serious impacts to their health, wellbeing and productivity at work. Yet tragically it seems few care about the people who keep our society running - this group is often overlooked in workplace support, and overlooked in research and policy spheres too - truly "the forgotten shift". This is a moral failure, and an urgent issue for industry and government to address.

Shift working and sleep deprivation have well-proved consequences for your body (higher prevalence of diabetes, lower immunity), your mind (impaired concentration, memory and creativity) and your mood and relationships (higher anxiety, depression, impulsive behaviour and divorce). At work, tired staff are less productive and accident rates are higher at night - sleep deprivation is estimated to cost the UK economy £50bn per year! More broadly, night workers face other inequalities - they are more likely to be from the global majority, to have second jobs and to be in lower-paid work. Action is needed to prevent rising health inequalities.

Night Club tackles this issue in an entirely unique way - bringing sleep science to life, taking the experts to night workers wherever and whenever they are on shift. Since the early partnership and experimentation with Co-Op, John Lewis and Thames Water, we feel like proud parents looking over this report about what Night Club has learned and achieved since 2018!

At an individual level, 10,000 workers have been directly supported to improve their sleep quality - and many thousands more have been helped indirectly.

At an organisational level, more than 30 employers have worked with Night Club to better support and recognise the issues faced by their teams.

At a system level, we've built a large group of crossparty MPs in support of our mission, working with the business and work select committees and the Mayor of London among others. Real traction is being gained to get more protection and recognition for shift workers.

There is still so much more to be done to support the 8.7m strong hidden army of nighttime workers that keep our 24/7 society running. We are excited to see Night Club continue to champion this group at all levels - it really is a clear win-win for everyone involved.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this endeavour so far, and especially to Impact on Urban Health, the charity whose support has been instrumental in scaling up this mission. Onwards!

Sarah Douglas

Director of The Liminal Space and Founder of Night Club

Professor Russell Foster

Director of the University of Oxford's Sleep & Circadian Neuroscience Institute and Lead Sleep Scientist for Night Club



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Since its inception in 2018, Night Club's sleep support for nighttime workers has been delivered to more than 10,000 employees across the UK. This momentous milestone - as well as marking three years of work in partnership with Impact on Urban Health - offers an opportunity to take stock of the achievements of the Night Club programme and explore some of the learnings from it.

This report draws on a fuller evaluation report authored in 2024 by Cornish & Grey. As part of that evaluation, new work was carried out to inform its findings including feedback from workers participating in Night Club (analysis of historical data collected plus additional interviews), Night Club sleep expert facilitator observations, in-depth feedback from employers (including new interviews), and quantitative polling of 1,500 UK adults aged 18+.

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Making the case for how and why working

WHAT IS NIGHT CLUB?

Night Club is a unique initiative that brings sleep researchers together with people who work at night and employers around the country to create a better and healthier experience of working at night. It aims to empower individuals and organisations with the knowledge and tools to effect change.

The programme is developed by The Liminal Space, a social purpose creative agency in partnership with Oxford University's Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute. It has received particular support from Impact on Urban Health and The Wellcome Trust. Since its inception in 2018, Night Club has been through a process of constant review, learning, evolution and expansion in the way it delivers its programme.

Core intervention

There are now five variations of this offer, to meet the varying needs of night workers and employers. They are:



MAX

A walk-in installation within a shipping container, kitted out with an exhibition and learning area.



FLEX

A walk-in exhibit and learning area made to fit any space, whether it's a foyer, canteen or meeting room.



MINI

The Night Club learning experience condensed into a portable toolbox with minimal set-up time.

→ Each of the above involves up to seven 45-minute sessions in a night, delivered by skilled sleep facilitators who engage participants with activities, quizzes, healthy snacks and refreshments, recipe cards and sleep tips.



TROLLEY

Night Club on wheels enabling brief (typically 10-15 minute) interventions. Designed initially for the NHS to allow Night Club to support staff on wards.



ONLINE

Live, interactive small group sessions led by a sleep expert. The online model allows Night Club to reach a wider range of workforces, including small and distributed teams.



Sleep Champions Programme

To sustain the impact of Night Club within an organisation, volunteers from the workforce are trained over 12+ months with the knowledge, tools and confidence to support their peers with issues around sleep.

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT NIGHT WORK

Today, in the UK, more than 8.7 million people are estimated to work at night¹. That's a staggering 27% of the entire UK workforce - often described as "The Forgotten Shift". Night-work incorporates a broad range of activities, from transport and retail to healthcare and hospitality. Yet despite how common night-work has become, myths about it persist.

"Everyone gets used to working at night"

There is a widespread perception - particularly among managers who have no experience of working at night - that if you just get through the first few weeks, your circadian clock settles down and your body gets used to working at night.

In fact, academic research shows the opposite: "97% of night shift workers do not adjust to a nocturnal regime but remain synchronised to daytime"².

Polling carried out as part of Night Club's evaluation shows that only 24% of UK adults understand that the statement "Everyone can get used to working a night shift – it just takes time" is not true, and this falls to just 16% of night workers, showing that night workers and their employers do not understand the negative impacts of working at night.

"The longer I work the harder I find working nights. I thought it would get easier, but I've never got used to it."

- Nighttime worker

"If I haven't had the best sleep... concentration is normally one of the first things to go, your mind wanders."

- Nighttime worker

"Lack of sleep doesn't impact your productivity"

There is a pervasive culture, particularly prevalent among more male-dominated industries, where needing sleep is looked down upon and that you just need to be tough to survive on little sleep.

In polling for Night Club, 56% of the total sample agreed that they can be productive even when they have not been sleeping well - increasing to 60% of men and 62% of night workers.

Reality is rather different: academic research shows that after one or two nights with reduced sleep, performance declines, with less effective decision-making and increased risk-taking³.

"Sleep is low priority for night workers"

Many night workers hold two jobs to bring in extra income and have caring responsibilities too when they come home from work in the morning.

Night Club polling shows that night workers are as likely as daytime workers to have caring responsibilities (50% of day workers and 52% of night workers) and night workers are more likely to have second jobs than day workers (33% vs 22%). As a result, sleep is seen as a low priority for many night workers - something that just needs to be fitted in around caring responsibilities and second jobs.

However, academics and clinicians agree that sleep needs to be prioritised. Sleep disruption is linked with obesity, type 2 diabetes and lower immunity, and shift work is officially classified as "probably carcinogenic" by the World Health Organisation⁴.

"As someone who looks after quite a lot of things, I'm prone to making sure everyone around me is okay. All [that responsibility] can contribute to not having much rest."

- Nighttime worker

NS: The night-time economy TIK (2022)

² Professor Russell Foster: Sleep, circadian rhythms and health, Royal Society (2020)

³ Society of Occupational Medicine: Best practice managing night workers (2022)

⁴ WHO: Night Shift Work: IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans Volume 124 (2000)

NIGHT CLUB'S GOALS

To effectively address the issues faced by nighttime workers, Night Club operates at three distinct levels:



INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Nighttime workers can access and engage with evidence-based sleep health information during their working hours.

The information offered during these facilitated sessions focuses on improving sleep hygiene, diet, exercise, mental health, and understanding sleep patterns.



ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Data and insights from participants at each delivery are collated to provide succinct feedback for their employers. Night Club runs workshops with senior leaders to explore how they could better support their night workers' needs.



SYSTEM LEVEL

Night Club is leading a campaign, informed by the experiences and insights of workers and employers, to influence policymakers to better recognise and improve protections for night workers.

It also hosts a Consortium sharing best practice and research among a dynamic group of like-minded business leaders.

NIGHT CLUB IN NUMBERS

Since its launch in May 2018, Night Club has directly trained more than 10,000 workers from more than 30 companies, and supported many thousands more indirectly. Here is a snapshot of who Night Club has reached to date⁵.



Participants who work early, late and night shifts either permanently or as part of a rotating shift pattern.

> 30% Participants who identify as Black, Asian, mixed race or other non-White group. Over a third higher than the population as a whole.

Participants who have long-term 29% health issues, including anxiety, depression, chronic pain, a breathing problem, diabetes,

a heart condition, high blood pressure.

Participants who typically sleep less than 6 hours in a 24-hour period.

Participants who identify as male. Most workforces Night Club has supported are predominantly male, except notably NHS clinical settings, which have typically had a female majority.

Participants who state they have : poor/variable quality sleep.

Statistics are based on data from Night Club deliveries between December 2021 and March 2024

⁶Co-op case study video [www.vimeo.com/481217070]

Guy's Hospital case study video [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BD-RdcuGGK4]

Britvic case study video [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sqdY1en6-s]

THE JOURNEY SO FAR...



2018

Night Club pilot developed in partnership with the Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute at Oxford University and seed funded by The Wellcome Trust.

घातक



Night Club rolls out support to staff with its founding employer partner Co-Op, as well as John Lewis Partnership and Thames Water, using our flagship Max shipping container.



- → Impact on Urban Health grant funds Night Club's development, engagement with employers in Lambeth and Southwark, and work at policy level.
- → SOS (Support Our Staff) initiative is launched to provide extra support to key night-time workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, which exacerbated sleep challenges for many.
- → Night Club publishes its manifesto sharing key insights about night workers and calling on employers and policymakers to recognise night workers as a distinct group.

2021

STUDY VIDEO

- → Night Club reaches new sectors, delivering to public sector staff for the first time, in a hospital setting and for bus drivers.
- → Launch of the Night Club Flex delivery model.
- → Night Club exhibits at London Design Festival in Southwark Street Arch.
- → Launch of the Night Club Mini and Night Club Trolley delivery models.



STUDY VIDEO 7

- Night Club founder Sarah Douglas gives evidence to the Business Select Committee in Parliament, leading to a recommendation for Government to take action on night worker protections.
- → Sleep Champions initiative delivered for Co-Op and Veolia to embed and sustain the impact of Night Club in the long-term.
- → Night Club launches its campaign in Parliament with a reception for more than 20 cross-party MPs, plus night workers and stakeholders.



- → Night Club reaches 10,000 staff directly supported by its programmes, across more than 30 employer partners.
- → Night Club Online piloted and launched, opening up Night Club to support wider audiences.
- → Impact on Urban Health provides continuing support to the Night Club policy campaign, following success including positive meetings with the Mayor of London and the Minister of State for Business.



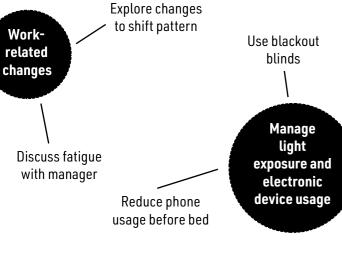




INDIVIDUAL IMPACT

Changes made by participants

Following their engagement with the broad range of topics covered in Night Club, participants were asked to describe some of the changes they planned to make to improve their sleep. These included:



What approaches are successful?

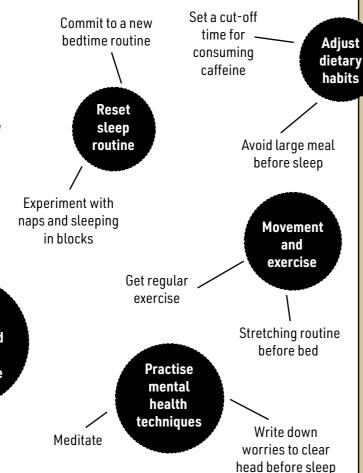
Night Club has a proven track record of engaging participants within this under-served group and enabling them to make meaningful changes in their work and home lives. It also creates space for participants to describe what they need from employers and the wider system for better sleep.

The key ingredients for success with individuals are...

The **interactive learning experience** is essential. By creating a series of unusual yet accessible and fun activities, experiments and quizzes, Night Club is both engaging and flexible enough to be accessed by people with different learning styles and needs.

Night Club's relatable **sleep expert facilitators** also play an important role. Their presence has resulted in greater levels of interaction and engagement of participants. The facilitator team includes clinical psychologists, sleep scientists and other health and wellbeing professionals, most with direct experience of shift work.

89% of participants agree that they have learnt something new to improve their sleep quality.



The ability to effectively reach diverse and often under-served workforces. Night Club engages workers where they are and has developed expertise around reaching participants who may not typically engage with wellbeing initiatives. Ongoing development means the offer can fit in very different workplaces - from the Max, a fully-equipped shipping container to the Trolley, Night Club on wheels for brief interventions, and even a new live, interactive online model.

Night Club's **independence** - most visible in its distinct branding - has also played a key role in its success. Qualitative feedback from both participants and employers indicates that it is important that Night Club is seen as a distinct brand from in-house wellbeing programmes, something which the employer is learning from too.

Night Club helps workers share their feedback and experiences of work and sleep throughout, to support a feedback loop with employers and to identify areas for system change.

Voices from the 'Forgotten Shift'

79% of participants are confident that they can make changes as a result of experiencing Night Club.

Ada, 32 [ICU Nurse]

Ada's job is tough. She works nights in a hospital's critical care unit. It is stressful - if she makes a mistake it can have serious implications for her patients. But it is fulfilling too.

Despite loving her job, Ada worries that being Nigerian might stop her from getting a better position at work. At home, there's a lot going on too. After working all night, she takes care of her daughter for much of the day and has little time to sleep. She wants another child with her partner, but recently had a miscarriage.

Because she's so busy and tired, she often eats unhealthy food and has put on weight, which worries her. She also relies on too much caffeine to get through the night.

Ada would like her employers to provide better break facilities, healthier food options and to take her views into account in their decision-making.

Despite everything, she keeps going because she loves her job and her family.



Dave, 48 [Maintenance Engineer]

Dave finds night work hard, particularly the stretch between 2am and 4am; his body just wants to sleep. He does maintenance work for a transport operator, and it would be too risky for the public to do the work during the day. Dave's health makes his job harder too. He's pre-diabetic and has poor circulation. In winter, it sometimes feels like his feet and hands are going to drop off.

The hardest part of the job for Dave, though, is that he feels his managers don't really get what night shift workers go through. His top three suggestions are: to be able to have hot food at night to warm him up, scheduling training at times that suit night workers not just people who work during the day, and to meet this scheduler in person - so he is seen as a person and not a number.

Mike, 35 [Logistics worker]

Mike is a worrier. After working all night at a big warehouse in the West Country as a picker, when he tries to sleep his mind races which makes it hard to get any rest. His phone doesn't help either. It buzzes with messages from his bosses asking him to work extra hours.

In his local area, night workers are known as "the zombies". Because he doesn't get to see the sun much and finds it hard to meet people, he has taken to using fake tan to stop his skin looking so pale.

Mike feels like he's caught in a loop: working at night, trying to look normal during the day, and unable to find a good way to calm down and rest. He says his employers could help by ensuring that things available to the day shift, like good hot food and access to a gym, are available to him. That would at least show he's not forgotten at work.



⁻ These stories are composites, based on multiple workers supported by Night Club, created to offer a window into the challenges of working at night.

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ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

There is only so much that individuals themselves can do to improve their experience of night work. So a key element of Night Club is gaining insights from night workers to enable their employers to better support and recognise them, and reduce the negative impact of night work on them. Night workers want greater understanding from managers about the impact of shift work. More specifically, night workers across industries consistently raised the following issues with Night Club as areas for improvement:

What night workers want

Shift work adjustments and flexibility

Modify shift patterns, including fewer rotations, shorter shifts and alternatives to traditional shift work.

Healthy food options

Improve the quality of food available in the workplace, including healthier vending machines, better canteen food, and specific dietary options (gluten-free, diabetic-friendly).

Relaxation and rest areas

Establish dedicated rest rooms or relaxation areas for employees to unwind or nap.

Flexible and longer break times

Allow more flexible scheduling and longer breaks to accommodate rest and personal needs, especially for parents.

Mental health and wellness support

Provide mental health support, including information on sleep and recovery, and more sessions discussing health issues faced by shift workers.

Workspace lighting

Varying lighting between work areas and social/break areas of sites to guide natural circadian rhythms.

"One thing I keep at the back of my mind probably more now as a result of Night Club is lighting. It's really easy to miss in office hours when everything is bright and shiny. When I walk around the site in the dark... we need to get some more appropriate lighting." - Senior Manager

Temperature in work areas

Improve temperature control in work environments, such as making warehouses warmer, to facilitate comfort and potentially improve rest during breaks.

Support across shifts

Support both day and night workers with comprehensive wellness programmes that address the needs of all employees.

Financial wellness support

Provide access to financial advisory services for employees, and acknowledge the stress financial issues can place on individuals, potentially affecting sleep.

Fitness and physical health Offer gym days and promote activities that support physical health as part of workplace wellness initiatives.

Action taken by employers

Night Club has had multiple impacts at an organisational level - from relatively simple quick wins to longer term strategic shifts, all born of insights and learnings from workers themselves. Some examples of the actions taken by employers include:

Shift work adjustments and flexibility

Inspired by insights from their staff and a speaker at a Night Club consortium event, one company is reviewing its rosters and shift hours.

Healthy food options

Different organisations have provided microwaves, air fryers and decaffeinated drinks to enable night shift workers to prepare healthy options during their breaks.

Culture change

At one company, Sleep Champions induct new night shift workers 1-1 using materials from the Night Club curriculum on how to mitigate the impacts of working at night. Another hosted a nighttime "Break the Stigma" roadshow focused on mental health.

"We are on a journey. We want to continue, we are just working out the best way forward." - Senior Occupational Health & Wellbeing Specialist

Mental health and wellness support

One employer now schedules annual health checks, and other wellbeing initiatives, during night shifts to avoid disrupting rest time. Another ran dedicated mental health first aiders course for night shift workers, to ensure activities also run at night.

Workspace lighting

One employer incorporated lessons around sleep and light into lighting design in designing a new logistics depot.

Wellbeing pods have been installed at one organisation so

champions or employee assistance programmes.

that employees can seek immediate support from wellbeing

Support across shifts / Relaxation and rest areas

"We gained a lot of information [from Night Club]. It was a good place to bring together leaders and front line staff and understand their needs."

- Senior Occupational Health & Wellbeing Specialist

Financial wellness support

Two organisations ran a Sleep Champions quarterly campaign around sleep 🛭 and money worries signposting both practical and psychological support.

requirements on night worker health assessments could be stronger. I'd like our company to take the initiative to track completion rates and increase our support to our people." - Safety Strategy Manager

"I feel current statutory

Fitness and physical health

Different organisations provide gym discounts and promote opening times that are accessible before or after their night shift.

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SYSTEM IMPACT

The case for change

From hospitals to logistics centres, in utilities and transport, the UK economy runs on night workers.

But at what cost?

Not only does night work impact the health and wellbeing of the **8.7 million** people who work at night resulting in them being **37%** more likely to have a heart attack?, **44%** more likely to have diabetes¹⁰ and **6** times more likely to divorce than daytime workers¹¹. There is also an economic impact of night work.

According to research by The Liminal Space and Cornish & Grey, lack of sleep costs the UK economy an estimated **£50bn** per year in lost productivity, health and care costs.

There is growing recognition of these issues as a result of the Night Club initiative, including in the April 2023 Business Select Committee report on economic growth¹². However, there is still much work to be done to ensure night workers get the protection they deserve, boost UK productivity, and ease the pressure on the NHS.

As a result, Night Club is currently engaged in an ongoing policy campaign, with supplementary funding from Impact on Urban Health, to bring about a meaningful shift in employer and government attitudes to night-work.

Policy campaign

Night Club is currently campaigning for four key policy changes:

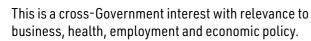
HEALTH CHECKS

Change the Working Time Directive to require annual health checks of night workers.

Night workers would receive regular health screenings to help prevent illness and proactively manage their health and wellbeing.

LEADERSHIP

Recognise the 8.7 million night workers as a distinct group in the UK economy by assigning a responsible Minister.





EXPERT TASKFORCE

Consult industry leaders and sleep scientists on protections and outcomes for night workers and take action on the findings.

Explore the support required for the 24-hour economy and night workers by convening a taskforce of experts to inform best practice and publish their findings and legislative intent in a White Paper.

RESEARCH

Fund greater research into the impacts of night work and ways to mitigate its health impacts.

As recommended by the recent Business Select Committee enquiry, investigate the health and safety implications of working nights.



¹⁰ Vetter et al: Night Shift Work, Genetic Risk, and Type 2 Diabetes in the UK Biobank (2018)

Impact to date

In 2020, The Liminal Space published the Night Club manifesto - a list of five key policy ambitions.

The manifesto was based on insights from programme participants, as well as new research, polling and analysis conducted into night-time working, and input from a consortium of employers established by Night Club to act as a peer-support and best practice sharing group. It set out the core principles of how employers and the government should think about night workers.

Since the manifesto's launch, Night Club has engaged with 45 political stakeholders, including MPs, Peers and civil servants, about the campaign, including through meetings and parliamentary events. There have been more than 20 written questions tabled connected to the Night Club campaign around shift worker rights.

Other notable impacts in the policy sphere, include:

January 2023: Night Club founder Sarah Douglas was invited to give evidence to the Business Select Committee's economic growth and labour markets inquiry, ultimately influencing them to make a recommendation that the Government take a greater lead on protection for night workers.

June 2023: Night Club hosted a parliamentary reception attended by more than 20 MPs at which its night worker policy campaign was launched. Speakers included Darren Jones MP, then Chair of the Business Select Committee, and Paulette Hamilton MP, member of the Health and Social Care Select Committee.

October 2023: Night Club met with senior politicians at the Labour party conference, including Sir Stephen Timms MP (Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee), Lord Tom Watson, Daniel Zeichner MP and Lord Jim Knight.

December 2023: Night Club
hosted London Mayor, Sadiq
Khan, with Amy Lamé (Night
Czar) and Clare Holland
(Leader of Lambeth Council)
at a Night Club delivery. The
Mayor of London echoed Night
Club's campaign points in the
corresponding news release.

March 2024: Met with Kevin Hollinrake MP,
Minister of State in the Department
of Business and Trade responsible for this
issue, to discuss the Night Club campaign,
following engagement in 2023 with the
Director of Labour markets and the civil
service team at the same department. Hosted
World Sleep Day drop-in session in Portcullis House.

Key Learnings

Three key learnings stand out as crucial to Night Club's positive reception from policymakers.

GAIN CREDIBILITY

The campaign is directly based on experience, insight and data from night workers and employers Night Club works with, boosting its credibility and legitimacy as well as the power of its engagement and leverage.

THINK LOCAL

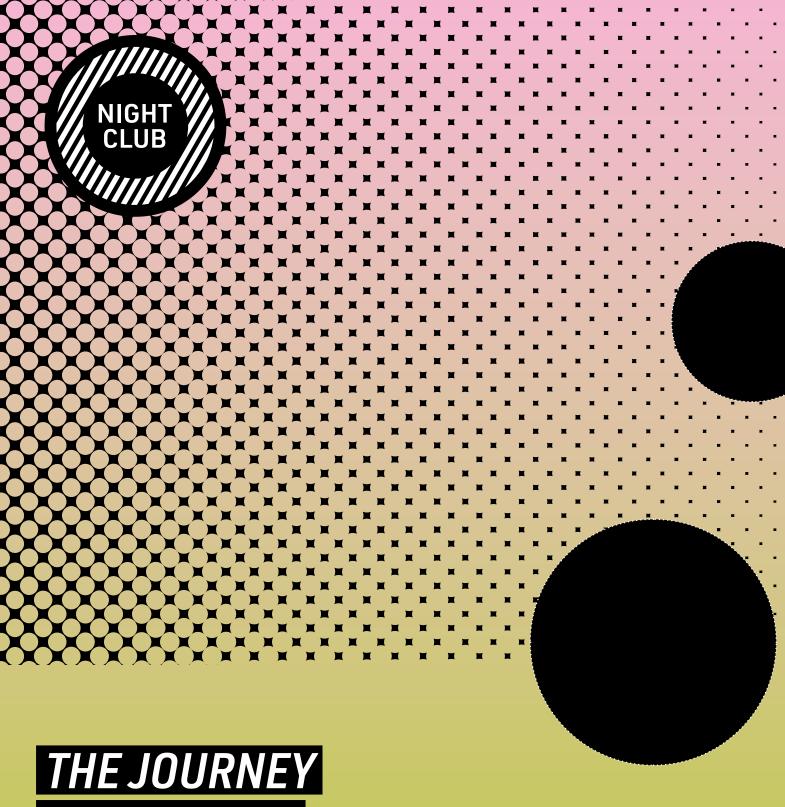
Some of the Night Club campaign's richest engagement and greatest progress has been at a regional or city level, where there is more dedicated policy around the nighttime economy.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Don't wait for national government to set a policy framework; forward-thinking employers, and other organisations, can encourage change by sharing good practice and highlighting areas in which they are working above legal minimums.

¹¹ Perry-Jenkins et al.: Shift Work, Role Overload, and the Transition to Parenthood (2007)

BEIS Select Committee: Post-pandemic economic growth: UK labour markets (2023)



CONTINUES!

Please get in touch if you want to find out more or collaborate with Night Club.

www.night-club.org | info@night-club.org | Newsletter | Follow us on LinkedIn

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