



Operation Mantle: Safeguarding Women during the Night Time Economy

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Like all leading UK city centres, tackling vulnerability and the policing of violence against women and girls constitute key priorities. Operation Mantle led by PS O'Donnell has achieved significant reductions in serious sexual offences within Manchester city centre ultimately creating a safer place for women to visit, live and work in. Manchester city centre also comprises of one of the UK's most prominent LGBTQ+ quarters where again, Operation Mantle has been central to providing both proactivity and an effective response to tackling sexual offences and wider vulnerability.

Partner Agencies

- Manchester City Council Public Health
- City Co
- St Johns Ambulance
- Village Angels
- CCTV for Manchester City
- Manchester City Council Licensing
- Manchester City Council Out of hours licensing
- ASBAT Manchester City Council
- GMP Crime Prevention
- LGBTQ Foundation

Summary

Scanning

The scanning shows that there were 206 sexual offences in Manchester City Centre following the reopening of the nighttime economy in July 2021 to Dec 2021. 52% of the offences occurred during nighttime economy hours with the majority of the offences occurring in three key locations which happened to be the top three busiest areas for the night time economy. It was clear that the power few concept was at play here.

Analysis

The analysis focused around the drivers of alcohol and the locations. The impact that alcohol had on decision making of the offender and the victim.

Response

A multi-agency approach was utilised within the hotspots. This used evidence based practice methods including hotspot patrolling and the 25 situational crime prevention techniques around enforcement of licensing principles, creation of safe spaces, crime prevention messages, and vulnerability training for bar staff, security staff and taxi drivers to extend that guardianship. It also looked at training for predatory behaviour, and information shared around sexual offenders who may be visiting the city centre to prey on women.

Assessment

The assessment showed a small reduction across 2022 when the police staffed the operation and then along 2023 when the police withdrew staffing for the operation. This demonstrates significant sustainability of the actions undertaken during the problem solving plan. The work in the hotspots did not displace the sexual assaults but there was a diffusion of benefit and a reduction across the wider City Centre.

There are also benchmark comparisons that demonstrate much less sexual assaults per footfall than comparison cities.

Word Count 258

Project

Scanning

Background

Operation Mantle was introduced to safeguard potential victims of sexual assaults. This was following the reputation that Manchester for being violent and for sexual offences dating back to 2019 and the scale of the problem as reported on the pictures below. As a result, women did not feel safe within Manchester. As the new paper article demonstrates below, the impact of this issue was profound and was well within the public consciousness.

The UK had undergone several full lockdowns from the start of the COVID pandemic in March 2020, this had effectively shut down all licensed premises. These remained closed until a phased reopening with places like nightclubs being the last to open fully in July 2021.

Following reopening, Manchester City Centre experienced high volumes of sexual assaults and also spiking which impacted confidence in policing which had been adversely affected due to the enforcement of COVID lockdowns and the issues around sporadic enforcement and unclear rules, but also confidence in hospitality which had been closed for so long and business had suffered as a result.

Appendix 3 shows the newspaper articles that demonstrated the breadth of the problem around sexual violence before COVID lockdowns.

What

From the reopening of the nighttime economy in July 2021, there was 441 sexual offences reported for the city centre with 208 of those offences being sexual assault on a female. This made Manchester City Centre, the hotspot for sexual violence with the force and particularly a hotspot for sexual offences on women. The covid reopening presented many challenges for police, in that licensed premises had clearly suffered because of being closed for so long but patrons being away for so long due to lockdown meant a significant spike in reporting. The impact of not having alcohol for so long and then this being reintroduced meant the over consumption of alcohol.

Appendix 1 shows all sexual offences within Manchester City Centre from Jul 2021 to Dec 21. This shows that the overwhelming number of sexual offences reported within the time frame were Sexual Assault on a Female. There were 206 sexual assaults on females during the period.

When

The data set demonstrated that 52% of offences take place within the night-time economy hours over the weekend. The hot areas were analysed and the temporal analysis below cover the days of the week to demonstrate this

Appendix 2. Graph showing temporal analysis of sexual assaults.

52% of all sexual offences take place during the hours of darkness so this would be the key time to deploy officers and disrupt any predatory behaviour and reduce sexual offences being committed in the city centre.

1800hrs-2100hrs Withy Grove

2100-0000hrs Peter Street
0000hrs-0400hrs Canal Street

Where?

The highest volume of sexual offences is within the Village, Arndale/King Street and the Courts beats within Manchester City Centre.

Appendix 4 graph shows the distribution of sexual assault against females during in 2021 across the beats within Manchester City Centre. This demonstrates a pareto curve in the spatial distribution of crime across Manchester City Centre and highlights 3 of the beats being responsible for many sexual assaults on women; Village, Arndale/King Street and the Courts.

The top three beats were looked at and the Street identified as being the highest within the area were identified below. This shows Peter Street within Courts Beat, Canal Street within the Village beat and Withy Grove in the A2C2 Arndale/King Street. This correlates to the volume of bars within the location.

Appendix 5 shows the distribution of sexual assault against females during 2021 across the street locations within Manchester City Centre. This again demonstrates a clear pareto curve and highlights 4 streets as being responsible for most offences and clearly highlights areas for the police intensification.

Who?

The victims are females who have been enjoying the night-time economy venues. Most victims were young females who are either young professionals or students. The biggest victim group age range was 18-30 years old which would fall in line with those that would opt to go to nightclubs and bars during nighttime economy hours.

The offenders were typically male within the same age range 18-30 years old however there was certainly more of a spread in terms of age than with the victim group.

How?

Many offences included the fondling/rubbing against female's buttocks or the offence placing their hand up a female's skirt. This was either done in the club on the dance floor or outside venues on the street.

Analysis

Utilising the Routine activities theory by Cohen and Felson which summarised criminological theory into crime occurring due to a motivated offender encountering a suitable target with the absence of a suitable guardian.

Problem Analysis Triangle

Victims

The victims are young females aged 18-30 years old. The victims fall within several social groups from young professionals visiting the City Centre to students that go to one of the four Universities in Greater Manchester. Victims are rendered vulnerable due to alcohol consumption "The majority of the women interviewed thought they were less aware of their own safety due to lowered

inhibitions and the increased confidence which consuming alcohol gave them. Women outlined multiple 'stupid' or 'risky' situations which they had found themselves in when drunk"¹.

De Crispigny stated " young women should not be held responsible for the behaviour of violent males who use the same pubs, but there is the assumption that simply by 'being there' women are always potential victims and have unnecessarily placed themselves at risk"².

Offender

There is no specific offender type identified and the information suggests that they can be either opportunist or predatory in their nature. There are no patterns that would reflect one or a small number of offenders being responsible for these sexual assaults on females. The offenders are largely male with very few to no same sex assaults. There are some key risk offenders who were dealt with as part of the operation, but this was not reflected in the data prior to the start.

When considering rational choice theory developed by Cornish and Clarke suggests that offenders are rational actors that weigh up risk versus rewards in their head before committing a criminal act. Should the risk outweigh the reward, the argument is that the offender as a rational actor would not partake in the criminal act. Rational choice depends heavily on the part of the brain that governs the ability to be able to make good decisions known as the frontal lobe. Evidence from studies that consider the long-term effects of alcohol show damage to this area alongside other areas in the brain that deal with memory and co-ordination. This also mirrors the short-term impacts of alcohol, it could be argued that the ability to be able to decision make when under the influence is significantly impaired by alcohol consumption. Therefore the ability to understand risk versus reward and be able to complete a calculation weighing them up to make a good decision. This is also considered in UK Criminal law where alcohol consumption is not an excuse but can be brought in to reduce charges in specific intent crimes owing to this. So rational decision making is impaired where the offender is drunk and this would fall more into the opportunistic category.

Location

Manchester City Centre experiences a footfall of over 37 million people per year and over 150,000 people per weekend during nighttime economy hours. There are four universities in Greater Manchester which means that there is a significant student population with 75,000 alone in the City Centre. Manchester City Centre is 45 mile squared and has over 600 licensed premises. Manchester has a significant reputation both nationally and internationally for being an entertaining place to visit and is often seen as England's second city after London.

Manchester City Centre has a comparatively low residential population which is mostly made up of the student population. As previously identified the main risk location is the city centre's Village area namely Canal Street however offenders tend to target those that are within close vicinity to the pubs and clubs. Peter Street and Withy Grove. These areas represent a high concentration of bars within the city centre and as a result during the NTE are the busiest areas.

The locations that these incidents took place in were night-clubs which due to the darkness of them and how densely packed they were, this offered cover for offenders to commit these offences. It was

¹ Sheard, L. (2011). 'Anything Could Have Happened': Women, the Night-time Economy, Alcohol and Drink Spiking. *Sociology*, 45(4), 619-633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406596>

² de Crispigny, C., 2001. Young women, pubs and safety. *Alcohol, young persons and violence*, pp.31-46.

equally split to on the streets within the above identified locations. Again, very busy locations due to the popularity of the locations as you can see from the picture below. The densely packed crowds offered anonymity to offenders but also allowed proximity to the victims. "Night-time economy spaces engineer close proximity to male strangers, whereby consumption of alcohol can obfuscate and confuse acceptable social boundaries. Alcohol consumption often complicated the use of women's pre-planned strategies as they were sometimes disregarded and not put into use due to women becoming intoxicated. This could arguably lead to an accelerated level of risk as 'being drunk' is a time of heightened vulnerability and perhaps the point at which plans for safety would be most useful"³ and "Violence has also been shown to be perpetuated by poor venue management"⁴.

Appendix 8 picture of Withy Grove for reference, this has several bars/nightclubs/pubs that cater to everyone. The premises here open earlier and generally have the lower price point alcohol and drinks offers. Appendix 9 is a picture of Peter Street for reference. Peter Street has a high concentration of bars and nightclubs which represent the busiest stretch in the city. This has a wider demographic of customers which it attracts from the early evening and closes at 4am. It is more expensive and is popular with the younger professional group and those slightly older due to the trendier, more attractive bars which are the place to be. Appendix 10 is a picture of Canal Street for reference. Canal Street located in the Village is one of the busiest areas in Manchester and has an international reputation for being a party place. It has a high concentration of bars and nightclubs with the late closing hours at 6am. This was the only place in the city to have nightclubs opening hours so late and it would be treated as a place to go when everywhere else had closed, to end the night out so to speak. It has a very low price point for alcohol sales comparatively to everywhere else and lots of drink offers.

Time

The temporal analysis completed around hot times and hot days reflects that of the nighttime economy hours with 52% of the offences taking place within the nighttime economy hours at the weekend and this is when each of the areas are at their busiest. It also provides a very target rich environment for victims and due to the busy nature of the city centre offers cover for these offences to take place.

Due to the nature of the locations being busy streets or inside busy nightclubs or bars, a person is often more consenting to people being within their personal space or certainly do not feel alarmed by someone being in proximity due to crowding of people. Due to the density of the crowd at some points or the darkness of the nightclub, this offers anonymity to the offender who may feel the risk of being identified is low in comparison to the rewards of carrying out the act.

Drivers

Drivers include alcohol. According to the crime survey for England and Wales, 86% of all violent crime is linked to alcohol consumption during the nighttime economy hours. The cheap price point and close to University Halls. Alcohol can impact massively on one's ability to make rational choices, this is further compounded by the biology of the offender group in that the frontal cortex, responsible for rational choice, is impeded due to re-development of neural pathways during

³ Sheard, L. (2011). 'Anything Could Have Happened': Women, the Night-time Economy, Alcohol and Drink Spiking. *Sociology*, 45(4), 619-633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406596>

⁴ Homel, R., Tomsen, S. and Thommeny, J., 1992. Public drinking and violence: Not just an alcohol problem. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 22(3), pp.679-697.

teenage years. It takes up to 25 years old for this to be fully developed. Pre-drinking before attending the venue is something that has been highlighted as a potential cause for the disorder within the location. Testa completed a review of studies into alcohol related sexual aggression, it was concluded from her research that there was a link between proximal the pharmacological effect of alcohol consumption and sexual aggression, defined as a man's attempt, whether successful or not, to coerce, threaten or force a woman to engage in sexual acts against her will⁵.

Further research looking at the effect of alcohol on wider violence suggests "there is little debate that alcohol is a contributing cause of aggressive behaviour"⁶. Wells et al⁷ considered this further in their study involving over 1000 participants and found that alcohol consumption did contribute to verbal aggression, that alcohol intoxication did contribute to physical aggression rather than verbal aggression. There was a strong link between alcohol intoxication and that physical violence⁸. It is a key point here to recognise that alcohol should not be sold to someone intoxicated, entry should be refused to premises of someone intoxicated, therefore the premises arguably are the ones at fault.

It is important to consider the impact that alcohol has on the brain in the short term, we must look at the long term affected areas on the brain which include frontal lobe, cerebellum and temporal lobes being particularly affected⁹ affecting balance, memory, judgement, and emotional regulation. Judgment i.e decision making, and emotional regulation are key in relation to making good decisions for the purpose of rational choice theory as it is impossible to weigh up risks versus reward properly to make a well-informed decision. Hence why we act so out of character following the consumption of alcohol.

Working hypothesis- focusing on key specific areas and adopting a multi-agency approach specifically around the key locations, it would show an overall reduction in crime across the City Centre.

Objective: to adopt a multi-agency approach to each of the areas identified to reduce sexual offences against females.

⁵ Testa, M., 2002. The impact of men's alcohol consumption on perpetration of sexual aggression. *Clinical psychology review*, 22(8), pp.1239-1263.

⁶ Parrott, D.J. and Eckhardt, C.I., 2018. Effects of alcohol on human aggression. *Current opinion in psychology*, 19, pp.1-5.

⁷ Wells, S., Graham, K. and West, P., 2000. Alcohol-related aggression in the general population. *Journal of studies on alcohol*, 61(4), pp.626-632.

⁸ Wells, S., Graham, K. and West, P., 2000. Alcohol-related aggression in the general population. *Journal of studies on alcohol*, 61(4), pp.626-632.

⁹ [Alcohol and the Brain: An Overview | National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\) \(nih.gov\)](#)

Response

Operation Mantle was initially launched in 2020 and was a city-wide operation in Manchester City Centre. The operation consisted of four plain clothes officers travelling around the City Centre looking for vulnerable people. Unsurprisingly this lacked any real impact.

An evaluation of Operation Mantle in 2022, led to a change in the approach and the current model of Operation Mantle as detailed below was launched. This approach utilised the POP method, being data focussed allowed the operation to focus on three key areas in Manchester City Centre that were experiencing the highest volume of sexual assault on a female; these areas were Withy Grove, Canal Street and Peter Street known as our power few locations.

By identifying the power few, the working hypothesis was that by targeting the top locations this would allow a greater success in reducing sexual assaults on females across the City Centre. It was a gamble to take the resources that were City wide and focus them on specific areas which initially met some resistance.

Working with Manchester City Centre licensing department and the out of hours licensing to work with premises to enforce the core licensing principles especially around the overselling of alcohol which was highlighted as a key driver in this problem. The literature supports this as do alongside being supported by the M.O. This was done to set rules with the premises around alcohol sales and to look to deter offenders. This was considered in the analysis when looking at locations and drivers.

Vulnerability training was rolled out to all staff both bar and security staff to spot the signs of vulnerability or predatory behaviour to extend the amount of people that could act as guardians to the vulnerable, but also to increase natural surveillance around predatory behaviour. This was highlighted when considering offenders.

The "ask for angela" campaign was rolled out across the city and staff within bars were trained on, this offered women the opportunity to ask for help in a discreet fashion. "Ask for colin" was rolled out as the male equivalent. Officers and CCTV were briefed around spotting the signs of vulnerability and predatory behaviour, positive engagements were to take place in both circumstances. This was to again highlighted in the analysis section and was aimed at providing guardianship for victims.

Two safe spaces are in place in the city centre, to extend guardianship over potential vulnerable victims as some of the offences happened on the street whilst making their way home. This offered a space for people to sober up, charge up phones and arrange transportation home. Although a lot of the offences occurred within licensed premises some did occur in the street whilst waiting for transportation or attempting to get home. This was aimed at removing the vulnerable victims from the situation to stop that convergence around routine activities theory.

Using GMP's City Centre social media platforms to deliver crime prevention advice such the "Ask for Angela" campaign and "Drink Spiking" vigilance messages and delivering awareness and vigilance messages/posters to the licenced premises via the Pub & Club network. This was to post instructions and to deter offenders.

Police officers in high visibility patrols in hotspots as part of operation custodian which covers the nighttime economy which was done to deflect offenders.

Women's Charter visits with GMCA VAWG lead took place which involved visits to premises with high levels of VAWG. Led by partners and assisted with by the police, it encouraged venues to sign up to state that they would assist in making their venue safer for women during the nighttime economy. An example of this was the creation of safe spaces within venues that were highlighted as having demand around sexual offences, the patrolling of welfare officers who again would look for vulnerability and predatory behaviour, environmental changes to premises. Amendments were made to premises whether this be changing the location of staffing, CCTV or changing the locking mechanisms in toilets to target harden against sexual assault happening in premises.

Enhanced VLPs (visit licensed premises which were joint visits by Manchester City Council Licensing officers and GMP Licensing officers) to premises increase reports. To set rules with venues around their responsibilities. This was done as studies pointed to the lack of control within licensing premises contributing significantly to violence within the nighttime economy.

The university team worked closely with students as they were identified as a key victim group within the offences to give out crim prevention advice and safety messages. Sex offender management unit sharing details of key offenders which would then be featured on the briefing to reduce anonymity of any potential offenders. Controlled access to premises by ensuring those found to be convicted of an offence within any licensed premises in the City Centre was barred. This was done by City Co after GMP would share the details of offenders with them.

Some premises were taken to review following sexual offences taking place there and this resulted in a hotspot venue being closed as Appendix 7 shows where one premises was closed following a number of sexual offences perpetrated against women.

Assessment

Reduction in demand

When comparing 2021 with the period of the intervention in 2022, the following reductions were demonstrated. Canal Street/Bloom Street 2.08 offences per month with the baseline period being 2 from the scanning phase, however there is 7 offences attributed to the Pride Event which took place and did not take place within our scanning phase due to Covid. If these figures were removed, it would bring the crimes to 1.5 sexual offences within the area per month.

For Withy Grove, the base line figures from 2021 puts crime at 1.8 offences per month on the Withy Grove. Comparatively this reduces to 1.33 offences per month on Withy Grove.

The baseline crime for Peter Street In 2021 is 1 sexual assault per month with the intervention showing 0.9 sexual assault on a female occurring.

The figures above coincide with the biggest drive to improve reporting of crime in Greater Manchester Police where GMP reported an extra 55,000 crimes during the period owing to the level of under-reporting uncovered in the HMICFRS Peel Report, in addition to the drive to promote reporting of these incidents through work being done on the Women's Charter.

Sustainability

Since the plain clothes part of the operation ceased to be funded in December 2022, in 2023 there has been a further reduction of sexual assaults on females across Manchester City Centre of 42 offences compared to 2022.

Comparing 2023 to 2022 figures

- On Peter Street there was a reduction of 4 offences in 2023.
- In the Canal Street area there was a further reduction of 1 offence in 2023.
- Withy Grove demonstrated the biggest reductions of 25 sexual assaults on females comparing 2023
- Reduction of 42 offences city wide in 2023. Arguably there has been no displacement clear that there is a diffusion of benefit as the treatment areas refer to 32 of the 42 reductions of sexual assaults on females. This is a reduction of harm according to the Cambridge harm index of 798.

Comparison to other forces

Benchmark comparisons were used to assess Manchester City Centre against two other cities in the UK. The two other cities were chosen as they also had a strong student population and had a large nighttime economy. Due to the size of Manchester, we were unable to find a true comparison site to compare data to data as Manchester attracts a significant amount of people per year in comparison and has four Universities. The comparisons were drawn on footfall from BID data for the period and sexual assaults on female data across 2022:

- Manchester City Centre had one offence per 123,775 people.
- Liverpool City Centre had one offence per 74,013 people.
- Newcastle City Centre had 1 sexual assault crime based on 70,945 visitors.

When using these comparisons to look at cost benefit analysis, the home office economic and social cost crime calculator was used. The cost of the operation over the period was £75,000 for the overtime offer and £25,000 duty time approx. When looking at footfall and offending figures, Manchester when compared to figures in Liverpool is saving an approx. £1,223, 560 per annum on sexual assaults on females and in comparison, to Newcastle, an approx £1,192,600 both with the cost of the policing operation deducted.

Partner Agency views

The Charter supports other safety initiatives and police operations across the city, such as Operation Mantle which targets sexual offences and Operation Custodian, which is GMP's response to policing the NTE, and has been a positive way to work with licensed premises by helping to raise awareness of sexual violence, spiking and spot predatory behaviour in our night-time economy.

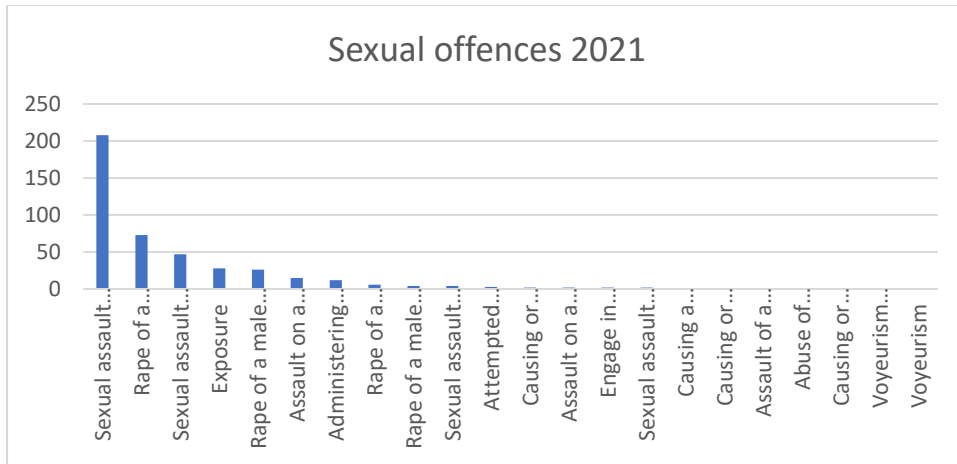
Candida Turner GMCA

Word Count

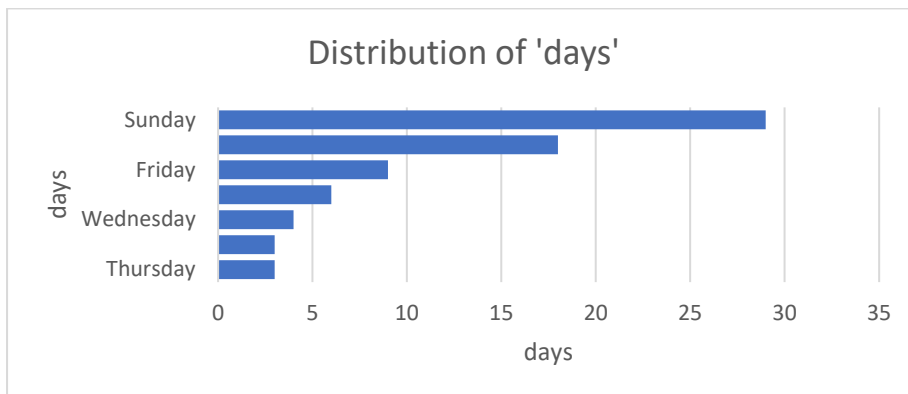
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Appendices

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3

The worst places in Manchester city centre for sex attacks, robberies and break-ins have been revealed

"These figures show the impact of savage government cuts to police and wider services that keep Mancunians safe"

NEWS By Steve Robson

19:18, 21 JUL 2019 | UPDATED 21:51, 21 JUL 2019

Bookmark



Manchester Evening News

Bookmark



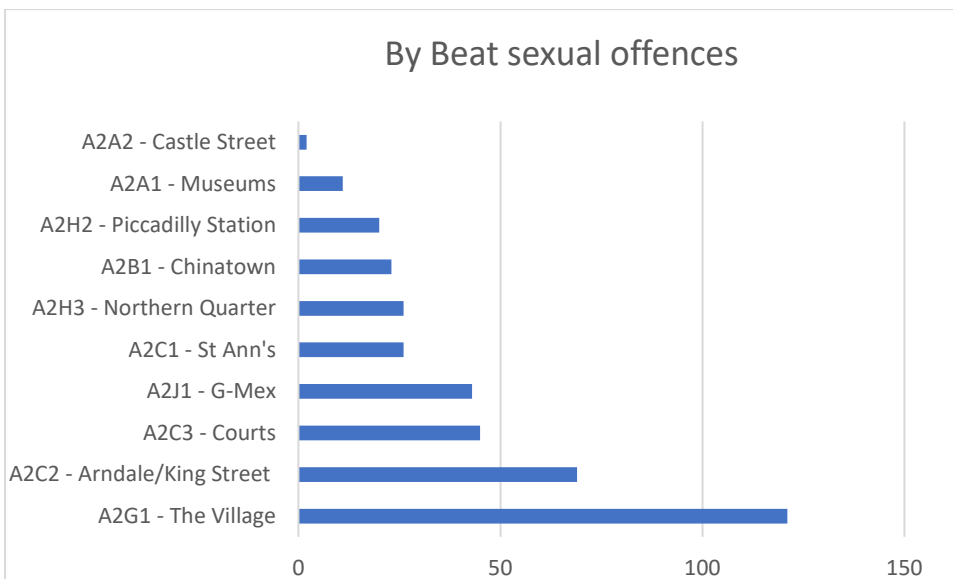
criminal activity.

But now the *Manchester Evening News* has obtained figures that, for the first time, show the true scale of the task facing our struggling police force.

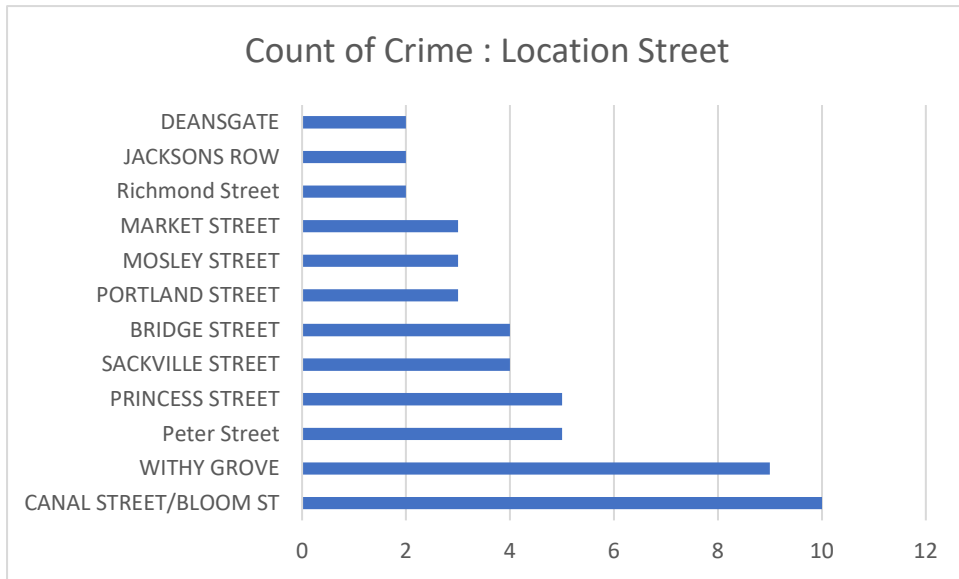
The numbers from April 2018-2019 show that on an average day in the city centre police receive; one report of a sex attack, ten violent assaults, three burglaries, 42 thefts, four robberies and three public order offences.



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



Appendix 7

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NEWS

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Manchester's Bloom nightclub shut down following rape allegations

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Appendix 8



Appendix 9



Appendix 10



Appendix 11

Full quote from Candida Turner GMCA

The Women's Night-time Safety Charter was launched in Manchester in September 2022, the initiative was introduced to improve the safety for all women in the night-time economy. It's aimed at all businesses who operate in Manchester's thriving night-time economy, by promoting safety and a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and violence. By working in partnership and having the support and endorsement from GMP it has helped to promote and increase the number of organisations pledging support to the Charter to over 350 licensed premises. The Charter supports other safety initiatives and police operations across the city, such as Operation Mantle which targets sexual offences and Operation Custodian, which is GMP's response to policing the NTE, and has been a positive way to work with licensed premises by helping to raise awareness of sexual violence, spiking and spot predatory behaviour in our night-time economy. Using the latest GMP crime data and in partnership with the City Centre Licensing team focussed & targeted VLP's are conducted at those premises that have sexual offence and/or spiking crimes recorded on them so that key messages, advice and support can be delivered. Also in liaison with GMP's Crime Prevention Branch I managed to purchase a quantity of crime reduction material, such as anti-spiking foil tops and testing strips, that GMP Officers can hand out to both licensed premises and members of the public who are out and about in the city centre to again raise that awareness and preventive messaging.