



## **PARTNER BRIEFING: PROJECT VIGILANT**

### **PROJECT VIGILANT HISTORY**

**Appendix 1**

Project Vigilant is an operation developed by Thames Valley Police that deployed plain clothes police officers into the **night-time economy (NTE)** in Oxford. It is a perpetrator focused operation seeking to deploy several disruption tactics to prevent offences taking place.

Project Vigilant was found to be an effective tool to combat sexual offending in the Oxford NTE. As a result of Vigilant deployments, there was a 50% reduction in NTE-related rapes and a 30% reduction in NTE-related sexual assault.

### **VIGILANT WILTSHIRE**

In 2021, Project Vigilant was rolled out in Wiltshire NTE locations. This operation was deemed successful, with important disruption achieved and intelligence obtained surrounding vulnerability and predatory behaviour.

Further NTE deployments are planned for Swindon in 2023 as a result of successful Safer Streets funding bids by the local multi-agency groups. A more fluid approach is forecast for the rest of Wiltshire - whilst not having any one concentration of NTE the size of Swindon's, the county's NTE hotspots are spread over a large geographical area. The plan is to deploy a smaller, more mobile Vigilant team into areas where risk is higher according to where there may be special events and in liaison with CCTV operators, local Policing units, etc.

Vigilant is designed to work with venues and door-staff to raise awareness of the risk of predatory sexual offending in an attempt to increase public safety and increase reporting any sexual offences and drive up intelligence submissions on suspects and risk locations through normal police channels or other agencies such as Crimestoppers.

### **VIGILANT DAY**

An early strategy for the Wiltshire VAWG (Violence Against Women And Girls) team was to refresh and re-focus Project Vigilant so that it not only tackled the NTE, but daytime public spaces like shopping centres and recreational parks where predators can loiter in plain sight and minor criminality and anti-social behaviour can make areas feel unsafe and intimidating.

Units target males who may seek to exploit, assault, harass or intimidate female members of the public who frequent the deployment areas. The method of policing is deliberately intrusive and robust without being aggressive or oppressive.

### **INTENTION**

- Safeguard the vulnerable from sexual violence through proactive disruptive patrols and providing an enhanced response to serious sexual offences
- Identify predatory behaviour by potential perpetrators and prevent further offences through overt intervention
- Gather intelligence around potential perpetrators for future disruption and to assist future investigations

- Deter violence, intimidation and street harassment against women and girls and offer reassurance through a visible uniformed presence
- Provide a robust 'broken windows' policing approach to deter and manage individuals engaged in disorder, anti-social behaviour and petty offences that affect the quality of life of those using the same public space (e.g. aggressive begging, public drunkenness)
- Identify vulnerable persons and safeguard them through engagement and advice – this includes women and girls who may benefit from signposting to support agencies such as SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre), drug & alcohol services, mental health services, domestic violence support and local authority housing/homelessness