

# **A night in the life of London's night-time workers**

## **The City that never stops**

London is a city that never stops. Such a large and complex urban system needs constant maintenance, throughout the day, and less visibly, throughout the night. However, many London residents and visitors know very little about the people who make the city work after dark: cleaners, doctors, nurses, hospitality workers and others. Their contribution to the social life and economy of London is vast. To put it simply: without them, our city would stop functioning. This pamphlet introduces the people that contribute to maintaining London life in the late hours of the night or in the early morning, who often remain invisible to most of us.

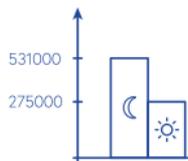




A third of everyone working in London works at night.  
**That is 1.6 million people.**

**Almost 531,000 employees in night-time occupations earn below the London Living Wage.**

In contrast, 275,000 people earn below the London Living Wage across all other occupations.



Employee jobs in **night-time industries are growing faster** than jobs in London's wider economy.

## Beyond the figures

If a third of London's workforce makes the city run at night, **it is important to acknowledge the contribution they make to our communities, but also to reflect on the challenges they face when working night shifts.**

For example, our research at UCL suggests that night-time workers are forced to choose between travelling alone at night or paying for a taxi. In addition, night-time workers do not have the same opportunities for community participation and activities due to their work hours.

## A night at the Hospital

Take nurses for instance. A hospital never stops and **it is very common for nurses to regularly work night shifts once, twice or even three times a week.** This involves working throughout the night, from 8pm to 8am, or finishing work late at night, around 1am or 2am. Each night shift is different and requires different work patterns, depending on where nurses work (A&E, intensive care units, etc.). However, **night shifts are usually exhausting, with little time to rest and to socialise within and outside of work.** Women often also bear the burden of family care when they return home. Take a look at our infographic – it will show you what a typical night shift looks like.



## Supporting night-time workers

**Policies supporting night-time workers can take many forms,** including making transport cheaper and easier; working with both employees and employers to improve night-time working conditions; or improving women's safety on their way to and from work (as well as at work). Individually, **we can all recognise the contribution of night-time workers** by acknowledging that the work they do is not easy and contributes to a great extent to our own well-being, and that of our communities.





## Before 8 PM

“Before getting to work, I would stop at the shop because once you are in the hospital you cannot find healthy food easily, or I would pack my snack.”

## 8 PM

“I get to work at 7.30 PM for the handover with my colleagues, and then I start my night-shift.”



## 9 PM – midnight

“Our job is to help people and some nights can get very busy. Sometimes families do not understand we are just doing our job, they get frustrated, anxious, angry. Most of them are nice and understanding, but some can make us feel unsafe.”



## Midnight

“We are normally entitled to one-hour break but what if you stay away for too long and a patient needs you? At night, I usually take shorter breaks than during the day.”



## Midnight - 8 AM

“When you work at night, you have so many things to look at: you need to check-in on patients, coordinate with doctors and other nurses, all night long. You never stop.”



## 8 AM

“When your shift is over you get on the bus at 8 AM and it can get very busy because people are going to work. Sometimes I wish they knew I had been working all night.”



This pamphlet is based on ongoing research and policy work conducted by the Urban Innovation and Policy Lab at University College London, and supported by UCL Public Engagement. It was created by Enora Robin (research) and Lise Charpentier (design).

This pamphlet has been developed alongside the Royal College of Nursing London region which is campaigning for better, more affordable transport and housing provision for its 60,000 members who work day and night across the capital.

---

**If you are working at night and would like to share your experiences, or if you are interested in hearing more about this work, do not hesitate to get in touch**

**Enora Robin**

✉ [robin.enora@gmail.com](mailto:robin.enora@gmail.com)

**To read more about the UCL Urban Policy and Innovation Lab work on the night, visit [www.urbaninnovationandpolicy.net/urban-night](http://www.urbaninnovationandpolicy.net/urban-night)**