The below diagram describes a sleep strategy, based on the evidence included in the article by Helen McKenna and Matt Wilkes. It is supported by their wider reading and discussions with experts in the field, although they note that quality of evidence is low. They offer this as a starting point from which to develop your own sleep strategy.

**Day of first night shift**
- **Goal: minimise sleep debt**
  - Sleep until you wake naturally (don’t set an alarm)
  - Avoid a morning coffee
  - Take a 90-minute nap to complete one sleep cycle, between 2–6pm

**During night shift**
- **Goal: improve performance**
  - Stay active
  - Take naps of 10-20 minutes during the early part of the shift
  - Take caffeine before napping but make that the last caffeine of the night
  - Prescriptions wakefulness agents are likely effective but associated with side-effects
  - Eat lightly and to comfort
  - Build in checks during critical tasks to mitigate against reduced alertness performance

**Last few hours and way home**
- **Goal: improve performance**
  - Avoid caffeine and nicotine
  - Try to avoid exposure to bright light (wear sunglasses even on a cloudy day)
  - Consider public transport rather than driving

**Days between night shifts**
- **Goal: minimise sleep debt**
  - Try to get to sleep as early as possible
  - Before trying sleep, avoid:
    - Bright lights
    - Screens
    - Alcohol
  - Sleep in a quiet, darkened, room
  - Accept that any sleep is better than none (even fragmented or shortened sleep episodes) and maximise sleep time

**Resetting after night shifts**
- **Goal: re-establish normal sleep rhythm**
  - Attempt 90 or 180-minute nap immediately following the shift
  - Go outside after waking
  - Aim to go to bed close to the normal time
  - Avoid daytime napping in the subsequent days