

PREVENTING



STREET

HARASSMENT

TOOLKIT

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FOR
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH
VOLUNTEERS AND OTHERS
WHO WANT TO
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We have 90,000 Neighbourhood Watch volunteers who are often deeply embedded within communities across England and Wales. They are well connected to others in their community and perfectly positioned to unite people against a common cause.

Street harassment not only effects individuals but whole communities. By raising awareness of the issue and standing up against it, you can play a crucial role in changing society to no longer accept harassment as a way of life.

THE IMPACT

For those who experience street harassment, it is often not an isolated incident. Many people are regularly harassed in public spaces. This may be due to their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or just for doing their job.

We know the long-term impact of repeated harassment can harm mental health and change behaviour.

It negatively limits people's ability to be in public spaces. Those who experience it often feel guilty and ashamed, putting the blame on themselves.

The impact on women and girls going about their daily lives can be seen in this video from Our Streets Now. Join the movement | OUR STREETS NOW

THE LAW

For those who experience street harassment, Everyone should feel safe walking the streets, day and night, with the confidence that the law protects them.

But in the UK, that's not the case, as there is no specific law against street harassment.

We believe that making street harassment a criminal offence will empower victims of harassment to report incidents and dissuade harassers.

WHY IS IT SO UNDER-REPORTED?

The two main reasons people cite for not reporting incidents are: "I didn't think the incident was serious enough to report" (55%) and "I didn't think reporting it would help" (45%).

Harassment is only recorded as a crime in certain circumstances such as if it:

- is a hate crime or incident motivated by race, religion, disability, gender reassignment, or sexual orientation
- is also a criminal offence e.g. sexual assault, actual bodily harm, criminal damage etc.
- involves a course of conduct i.e., two or more instances of harassment targeted at a person by the same offender, calculated to alarm or cause him/her distress, and was oppressive and unreasonable

There are four distinct ways that you can help tackle street harassment. This toolkit provides guidance to support you in each of these areas. You can choose to act on just one of these areas or a combination of different ones. Whatever you choose to do, you will be helping to make a difference and stand up against street harassment.

1. RAISE AWARENESS WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

2. TAKE ACTION TOGETHER

3. ENCOURAGE INCREASED REPORTING

4. HELP MAKE IT A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

ourwatch.org.uk

RAISE AWARENESS AMONGST YOUR COMMUNITY

Accepting that street harassment is an issue that we have to put up with and that little can be done about limits the ability of those who experience or fear it to have equal access to public spaces.

There are several ways in which you can highlight street harassment and encourage and support people in your community to take a stand against it to help challenge and change this perception.

1. SHARE OUR 'ARE YOU OKAY?' CAMPAIGN

Witnessing street harassment and not safely intervening, sends the message to those experiencing or perpetrating it that it's normal behaviour and should be accepted.

If you see someone experience it, ask them if they are okay. This lets them know you stand by them, and that street harassment is never okay. We can all do this small yet powerful act. By asking 'Are you okay?' we are no longer bystanders, we become active bystanders safely intervening on behalf of someone.

To share this campaign, download our campaign pack. Our pack contains a variety of resources that you can use to promote the campaign digitally or in person, such as posters, leaflets, and social media posts. To find out more about the ARE YOU OKAY? Campaign visit ourwatch.org.uk/areyouokay.



2. START A CONVERSATION

Offer to speak to members of local community groups to raise public awareness about street harassment and what to do if they experience or witness it. Gather people in a communal location and start the conversation using this [Understanding Street Harassment Presentation](#).

3. USE A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Post messages on a variety of social media channels and to display posters or hand out fliers on the street. Using a variety of methods to communicate the message helps ensure that it reaches more people, and some see it more than once, helps to change behaviour.

4. PROMOTE STREETSAFE

[StreetSafe](#) is an app that anyone can download and use to anonymously share information with the police about public places where they have felt or feel unsafe. This may be because of environmental issues, e.g. street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or behaviours, such as being followed or verbally abused.

Let people know about this service so that unsafe areas can be highlighted.
<https://www.police.uk/pu/notices/streetsafe/street-safe/>

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TAKE ACTION TOGETHER

Action by individuals can only go so far to stop street harassment and is unlikely to solve the problem on its own. If you have the time and network connections, consider initiating, organising or participating in action with other members of your community to prevent and tackle street harassment. Here are some examples.

1. INITIATE COMMUNITY ACTION

Bring members of your community or university campus together to talk about personal safety and brainstorm ways you can work together and with local partners to prevent and combat street harassment in the area. Use this [Presentation](#) to start the discussion.

2. PROMOTE THE COMMUNITY SAFETY CHARTER

Sign up to the [Neighbourhood Watch Community Safety Charter](#) and let others in your community know about it. It is likely that they too will be interested in signing up, particularly if issues such as antisocial behaviour, intimidation and harassment are prevalent locally. Once you sign up you will receive a promotional pack with resources to help you to start the conversation and help create a culture that does not tolerate these issues in your neighbourhood. Resources include:

- Conversation starters to support you speaking with people that you may not know
- Template letter to email to people across your network
- Postcard to print and put through neighbours' doors or poster to display
- Social media posts to share on local groups such as Facebook or WhatsApp groups

3. ORGANISE A MAPPING PROJECT

This is a great project to do in a group, especially with young people. Give out maps of your neighbourhood or ask people to draw their own. Ask them to indicate which places are safe and which are not, using red for unsafe places, and green for safe places. Sticky notes or drawings can be used to capture what it is that makes a place feel unsafe.

Once they've completed their map, individually or in small or large groups, ask them to talk about what makes them feel unsafe, why, and in what areas. See if there are patterns and brainstorm collective ways to address problem areas.

4. CONDUCT A COMMUNITY SAFETY / VISUAL AUDIT

Gather together a group of 5-7 people who come from a variety of backgrounds and who can offer different perspectives about issues of safety. If you can, involve a local PCSO, Neighbourhood Policing Officer, and a local Council representative. Walk together around the neighbourhood, once during the day and once after dark. Make notes of areas of concern to members of the group e.g., poorly lit paths, roads, and parks.

Ask each member of the group how safe they would feel if they were alone on the walk or how safe they'd feel waiting alone for a bus. If they answer that they do not feel safe, ask them the reasons why and record that on your notes. Download our guide to help assist you with conducting the audit and a template for you to record your notes, from [here](#)

Once you have the results, make recommendations for local police or council to take action to make the area feel safer. Use our tasking form (downloadable from the same page) to help you keep track of the recommendations for you and your partner.

ENCOURAGE INCREASED REPORTING

Street harassment is vastly under-reported, despite the increasing rates of incidents.

The 2021 YouGov survey shows that over 95% of all women did not report their experiences of sexual harassment.

To find out what is happening locally, consider hosting events or speaking to youth groups, community cafés, mothers' groups or faith groups and encourage those attending to share their experiences of street harassment.

Let people know that by reporting an incident, even anonymously, they will help to raise awareness of harassment and help improve the response of the police and other agencies to tackle and prevent it. Although some incidents of harassment may not be formally recorded as a crime, it is still important to report them to highlight the scale of the problem.

If you have a good relationship with your local policing team, discuss issues of harassment with them to see if you can agree some action by the community and / or the police or other partners that can be done to address them.

Encourage people to register for the 999 text service. This is a more discreet way of reporting a crime or incident.

Let people know that they can anonymously report harassment they have witnessed to Crimestoppers by telephone on 0800 555 111 or online at [crimestoppers-uk.org/](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/).

If you know it is happening in your area – remind people of the importance of reporting it.

HELP MAKE IT A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

Our Streets Now and Plan International UK are both running campaigns with petitions to change the law.

You could share these on social media and encourage your community members to write to your MP.

Find more information on the petitions and how to write to your MP here:

- Make Public Sexual Harassment a Criminal Offence in the UK
change.org/p/make-public-sexual-harassment-a-criminal-offence-in-the-uk
- Crime not Compliment: Make Public Sexual Harassment a Crime
plan-uk.org/act-for-girls/crime-not-compliment

'Did you know that in the UK, you could get fined for cycling on the pavement, but not for following a girl walking home from school? Girls are calling for change – and we can all play our part.' [Plan International](#)

ourwatch.org.uk

LEARN MORE

If you wish to learn more about street harassment, we recommend having a look at:

- Our Streets Now: ourstreetsnow.org/
- Plan International Street Harassment campaign: plan-uk.org/act-for-girls/street-harassment
- The Suzy Lamplugh Trust: suzylamplugh.org/; National Stalking Helpline - 0808 802 0300
- Prompts to help men change their behaviour: londongov.typeform.com/to/gdnTgnal?typeform-source=www.google.com
- Tips for making other people feel safer on the streets | Metropolitan Police met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/personal-safety-how-to-stay-safe/tips-making-other-people-feel-safer-on-the-streets/

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

Anyone seeking professional support can contact Victim Support's 24/7 Supportline on 0808 16 89 111 or use their live chat services via the website: victimsupport.org.uk/live-chat.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND CHARITIES

- Victim Support: Helpline - 0808 168 9111; mysupportspace.org.uk
- Women's Aid: womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/stalking/
- Childline: childline.org.uk; 0800 1111
- Rape Crisis: rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help
- Supportline: supportline.org.uk/problems/stalking-and-harassment/; 01708 765200

ONLINE VIDEOS AND COURSES

- Young women's experience: youtube.com/watch?v=bGZbyUGm3vs
- Reclaim the streets: youtube.com/watch?v=mqs8WILFyWY
- What would you do?: youtube.com/watch?v=ADTQt8FgZ60
- Online short course - Being that active bystander: glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/stand-up-street-harassment

SEE SOMEONE BEING
HARASSED IN PUBLIC?

WHEN YOU
FEEL SAFE,
ASK THEM

'ARE YOU OKAY?'

THOSE THREE LITTLE WORDS
LET THEM KNOW
YOU STAND BY THEM, AND THAT
STREET HARASSMENT IS NEVER OKAY.

IF YOU SEE IT. ASK IT.

Neighbourhood Watch Network is a charity registered in England & Wales. CIO No. 1173349



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