

A nighttime photograph of a cobblestone street in Manchester, featuring tram tracks running down the center. The street is flanked by historic brick buildings on the left and modern glass-fronted buildings on the right. Light trails from a passing tram or vehicle are visible on the right side of the road. A blue 'one way' street sign is visible on the left. The overall atmosphere is dark and urban.

Manchester Women's Night-time Safety Charter – Toolkit



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

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The Charter is part of the Council's approach to improving the safety of women and girls in the city of Manchester.

Everyone should feel empowered to play their part in creating positive change. Whatever your size, shape, or area of work, we encourage you to pledge your commitment to women's safety.

The toolkit provides practical steps for us to work together to make Manchester safer for women at night. Packed full of information, ideas and resources, it is designed to help your organisation take positive action towards change through our Seven Commitments. It will advise you on possible courses of action, some changes you may need to make, and how to upskill your staff.

Whatever steps your organisation can take will make a difference. Whether you're already proud of the great work you've been doing for women's safety, or want to know how to start, read on to find out how you can play your part.

Making a change

Of course, we want sexual harassment, assault and other forms of gender-based violence to stop. However, we can all commit to do more, which is what the Women's Night-time Safety Charter is all about. Businesses, organisations and services can't do everything, but we can all do more.

The Four Rs

Responsibility, Report, Respond and Redesign

Responsibility: Who is responsible for unacceptable behaviour? The person doing it! It's simple, and yet we know a victim-blaming culture still exists in too many places of work and play. Organisations that bring people together at night have a duty of care to ensure their spaces do not enable harassment, assault or violence towards women or anyone else. It's also important to recognise that taking responsibility is not the same as taking liability.

Report: A total end to these criminal behaviours is a long way off, and you can't prevent every single incident. When one happens, reporting it should be a simple, discreet and hassle-free choice. The process for what will happen next should be clear, with a range of options for how an incident can be dealt with.

Respond: Choosing to speak up should be encouraged through a culture that promotes trust and support for those who come forward. Staff should feel confident and clear on how to respond to these reports in a consistent, professional and empathetic way that prioritises safety and care, not personal judgement.

Redesign: We know that alongside experiences of harassment or assault, the perception of 'safety' affects women's choices when avoiding certain areas, services and businesses. Nightlife spaces should be designed to be welcoming and to minimise the risk of enabling 'opportunistic' perpetrators, who may use a venue's lack of clear visibility to their advantage.

The Seven Commitments

1. Champion

Appointing a named contact for this work who will champion and drive forward any action taken

2. Communicate

Positive, public/staff-facing communications campaign, both online and in your space(s)

3. Support your staff

Routes for reporting unacceptable behaviour while at work and supporting cultural change

4. Support the public

Routes for reporting unacceptable behaviour while using your service or space at night

5. Training (responding)

Staff training on the issue, including what to say and do, what not to say and do, and any relevant policies

6. Training (recording)

Staff training on information-sharing and appropriate recording of details

7. Designing for safety

Audit your spaces and adapt them to promote a safer environment and reduce risk of crime

Women's night-time safety and you:

A checklist for action

This checklist shows the recommended actions towards each commitment; they are discussed in more detail further on.

- Appoint a Champion for women's safety within your organisation.

Make all team members aware of who your Champion is so that they can go to them for advice and resources on women's safety.

- Communicate to your staff and customers that your organisation takes women's safety seriously and that you encourage people to come forward to report incidents.
- Make use of your internal and external channels to communicate your zero-tolerance policy on unacceptable behaviour and clear options for how and who to report this to.
- Create an environment where staff feel comfortable and confident to report any sexual harassment or assault they have experienced at work.
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- Provide signposting to local services and other HR and employee-assistance resources if they need further information.
- Have a clear written policy and procedure on how your organisation will respond to reports of harassment or assault and what people can expect from any processes.
- Make sure that anyone who experiences sexual harassment or assault in a space you are responsible for can report it in a simple, straightforward way.
- Offer a range of reporting methods, eg. in person, email, telephone, or a feedback form.

- Consider how accessible these methods are and how you can make sure people trust them.
- Ensure your staff believe and support anyone who comes forward to report something that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Make sure your management supports staff by encouraging belief. Provide specialised training for your staff on sexual harassment and assault, with a focus on how to respond and intervene if incidents take place.
- Ensure all reported incidents of sexual harassment or assault are recorded in compliance with data and confidentiality guidelines.
- Check that all CCTV and lighting is functioning correctly.
- Assess your provision of accessible and gender-neutral bathrooms.
- Commission an access audit of your buildings and spaces, and publish the findings online and in a printed form.
- Commission a safety audit of your buildings and spaces, and publish the findings online and in a printed form.

Putting the commitments into action

1. Appoint a Champion

- Appoint a Champion for women's safety within your organisation.
- Make all team members aware of who your Champion is so they can go to them for advice and resources on women's safety.
- Partner with local GMP Neighbourhood Teams to network and share best practice.

What is a Champion?

A Women's Safety Champion in your workplace is someone who makes a difference because they are:

- Passionate about helping people understand that women's safety is a shared responsibility
- Able to give time and resources to undertake meaningful activities and advocate for practical and cultural changes
- Willing to engage colleagues constructively and positively when taking action to address women's safety, and encouraging others to do so too
- Keen to spread the word about the commitments you have been able to meet
- Able to empower colleagues to challenge unsafe language, behaviours and practice, and support the training agenda.

Who should the Champion be?

The Champion could be a manager, the person responsible for licensing, or a member of your HR team if you have one. Ultimately, your organisation will need to decide which member of staff best fits the role of the Champion. Passion is more important than experience here. Many organisations will hopefully choose a member of staff with the time, energy and ability to inspire others to have honest conversations about this issue. Yes, men can be a Champion too!

What will the Champion do?

The Champion will be the point of contact for any work done on this issue, ensuring that the commitments you prioritise are met by your organisation. They will oversee the promotion of a culture of belief at your organisation and share best practice with other organisations.

2. Communicate

- Communicate to your staff and customers that your organisation takes women's safety seriously and that you encourage people to come forward to report incidents.
- Make use of your internal and external channels to communicate your zero-tolerance policy on unacceptable behaviour and clear options for how and who to report this to.

Why is a communications campaign important?

The simple act of developing, distributing and displaying a poster or notice about your organisation's values in relation to women's safety and the consequences for unacceptable behaviour can have a hugely positive impact.

In doing so, you are naming something that many organisations have traditionally refused to acknowledge. Publicly engaging with the topic could be read as 'we are not a safe place', but when we look at how common these experiences are, the opposite is true.

Many women and girls are reassured to know what the values of that space are and who and where they can go to for support. Too often, sexual harassment and assault are not spoken about due to fear of not being believed, or are seen to be a private matter. However, we know that women's safety should be everyone's issue.

Communication campaigns let staff and customers know that you take safety seriously. Naming your values publicly like this helps to create an environment where everyone feels confident to report incidents. It also lets perpetrators know that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated.

What should this campaign look like?

It might take the form of a poster campaign, publishing your harassment policy on your website, and using your social media channels to remind customers of your dedication to women's safety.

Some do's and don'ts for successful women's safety messaging:

Do's:

- Use positive language (eg. "We aim to create a welcome space for all our customers...").
- Focus on the consequences of unacceptable behaviour (eg. "You will be asked to leave...").
- Include why this is not okay (eg. "No one should feel unsafe while they are here) Summarise the options you're able to offer for reporting (eg. text, email, app).

Don'ts:

- Don't use graphic images that can be off-putting.
- Don't use sensational language or humour when describing these offences.
- Don't use scaremongering or descriptions of victims or perpetrators.
- Don't use any 'victim-blaming' language (eg. telling people to stay with their friends and stay alert to their surroundings). While this might seem helpful and well-intentioned, women who are targeted should not have to change their behaviour when it is perpetrators who can make a choice not to harass.

Further on in the toolkit we have included more examples of victim-blaming language.

3. Support your staff

- Create an environment where staff feel comfortable and confident to report sexual harassment or assault they have experienced at work.
- Provide signposting to local services and other HR and Employee Assistance resources if they need further information.

How can we create this environment?

The Equality Act 2010 defines sexual harassment at work as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault and hate crimes more generally are not experienced in the same way as other offences. This is in part because they target identity; that is, who a person is or is perceived to be. This is very personal. It means that victims often blame themselves and remain silent about what happened, whether due to self-blame, fear of being blamed or disbelieved, or being further victimised.

Workplaces should acknowledge these barriers and help to reduce and remove them with a combination of cultural and practical changes.

You could:

- Undertake an anonymous survey of your staff team to get a full view of how safety is experienced across the organisation. Who feels safest and in which roles? When do particular workers feel the least safe and why?
- Send a memo to all staff clearly communicating your policy and reminding them that all reports are confidential and will be taken seriously.
- Call a special meeting with managers to discuss and plan the different ways women's safety could be made a priority, including supporting the progress and leadership journeys of women in your organisation.
- Address workplace bullying and use administrative measures to vary power dynamics, such as rotating who chairs meetings.
- Investigate how skilled your teams feel when it comes to challenging harmful jokes or comments in the workplace, and role-play the best way of doing this to normalise it.
- Publish your Sexual Harassment Policy and Equalities Statement online.
- Invest in Sexual Harassment and Equalities training for the whole team.

4. Support the public

- Have a clear written policy and procedure on how your organisation will respond to reports of harassment or assault and what people can expect from any processes.
- Make sure that anyone who experiences sexual harassment or assault in a space you are responsible for can report it in a simple, straightforward way.
- Offer a range of reporting methods, eg. in person, email, telephone, or a feedback form.
- Consider how accessible these methods are and how you can make sure people trust them.

Why is having a clear policy and offering different reporting methods so important?

Having multiple ways to report will make it easier for people to overcome barriers they may be facing around sharing their experience with you. Accessibility is also an issue. Women with disabilities, including those who are deaf or blind, should feel equally able to make a report.

5. Training and responding

- Ensure your staff believe and support anyone who comes forward to report something that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Make sure your management support staff by encouraging belief.
- Provide specialised training for your staff on sexual harassment and assault, with a focus on how to respond and intervene if incidents take place.

How can I make sure my staff respond the right way?

Ensure that every public-facing team member is confident and that they have been trained in how to take a report of sexual harassment.

Advice for responding to harassment – how to respond to a disclosure of harassment:

The person coming forward has chosen you because they feel able to let you know about what has happened. Most people never speak up due to fear of being blamed or disbelieved, so the first thing you say is vital.

Try these fail-safe openers:

- Demonstrate belief (eg. "Thank you for sharing what happened.")
- Validate their experience (eg. "That is not okay.")
- Explain their options (eg. "We have a policy here which is..." and "I'm going to see what I can do to help.")
- Check you've understood what you've been told.
- Ask about any physical injuries or urgent needs.

Then, if necessary, support the person to inform the relevant manager or team member to take the matter forward. Offer to separately summarise their story on their behalf if they would like you to.

Communicate

You're not alone! Tell a colleague when you are concerned about behaviour you've witnessed, no matter how minor it seems, as this prevents escalation.

Be an active bystander

Responding effectively to harmful behaviour can start with focusing your attention and support on the person being targeted. Check in with the person you think is experiencing unwanted attention, such as by making small talk, eye contact or giving them a discreet signal. This gives them an option to divert the harasser's attention.

Record-keeping

Record all incidents and reports, no matter how minor. This helps others to keep up to date with issues and repeated behaviours. Keep your notes clear and stick to facts not opinions. You can also ask for and record the name of any customer while they are on the premises, but they have the right to refuse to give this information.

Remember your CCTV, and don't hesitate to call 101 or 999 in an emergency. However, remember that the targeted person may prefer not to speak to the police and should never be coerced into doing so. You will be assisting greatly by giving even general third-party information to the police through 101, 999 or your local Safer Neighbourhood team.

A culture of belief can become embedded within your organisation by regularly briefing and training staff and including your policy in new staff inductions. Make women's safety, inclusion and diversity part of your team culture through daily conversations. This is an ongoing process. Staff teams should be encouraged to challenge victim-blaming attitudes and managers should provide and encourage learning opportunities on this topic.

Examples of victim-blaming attitudes:

“She was plastered with after-work drinks, so it’s no wonder he took advantage.”

“I heard they were having an affair and she’s only calling it sexual harassment now that he’s gone back to his wife.”

“Women do need to bear some responsibility for making bad choices if they end up in one of our taxis with some dodgy guy.”

“It takes two to tango when it comes to sexual assault.”

6. Training: Recording

Ensure all reported incidents of sexual harassment or assault are recorded in compliance with data and confidentiality guidelines.

What incidents should be reported and how?

All organisations should follow appropriate discretion and confidentiality. Licensed premises should make use of their logbook. If you have a HR team, consider additional training on understanding the dynamics of sexual harassment, assault, gender-based violence and other Equality Act issues. Staff should know that no matter how minor the incident might seem, it is important that it is recorded – in an appropriate amount of detail and in a factual manner without personal opinions.

You could also:

- Undertake a data and confidentiality review to ensure that personal details are not being misused
- Ensure that your HR team – if you have one – has appropriate guidelines to stop the flow of gossip and misinformation if a disclosure has been made by one team member against another.

An official policy and procedure should set out clear expectations and ensure that each situation is dealt with fairly regardless of who is involved. This is important, because it can reduce fear of victimisation. A trade union can offer advice to staff, acknowledging that women who do speak up about sexual harassment should not be regarded as a problem in the eyes of their employer. Your staff should know their rights.

7. Designing for safety

- Check that all CCTV and lighting is functioning correctly.
- Assess your provision of accessible and gender-neutral bathrooms.
- Commission an access audit of your buildings and spaces, and publish the findings online and in a printed form.
- Commission a safety audit of your buildings and spaces, and publish the findings online and in a printed form
- Commission a safety audit of your buildings and spaces, and publish the findings online and in a printed form.
- Attend meetings with the local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

How can I adapt my space to make it feel safer?

If your organisation manages its own spaces, these should always be designed with health and safety in mind. The additional daily 'safety planning' that many women report having to undertake to remain alert against unwelcome sexual behaviour tells us that further steps need to be taken.

Questions to consider:

- Does your premises' layout support a woman's ability to move around or leave an area easily?
- Are there sufficiently lit paths and appropriate levels of CCTV, and do all staff understand who is responsible for using, maintaining and sharing this data?
- Can you designate a 'quiet' space in case staff or customers need some medical assistance or space to recover from an incident?

In addition to this, designing for safety can include how you allocate your human resources.

Are staff, including any security, positioned equally throughout the spaces you manage?

How well-lit are the indoor and outdoor spaces you're responsible for?

Would your CCTV be able to record any incident on-site? Do you record sound?

Can you confidently say your space is accessible for wheelchair-users, deaf people and people with disabilities?

Can you confidently say that those who would prefer to use a gender-neutral bathroom would be able to find one in your building?

GMP Neighbourhood Policing Teams

Partnering with these teams is a great way of getting involved in issues that affect your local area. Poor street lighting, security issues and antisocial behaviour can all be discussed at regular meetings. They are also a good way of finding out about local good practice and initiatives.

Further information

The following organisations can be contacted for further information on training, designing for safety, accessibility and diversity resources:

CityCo: www.cityco.com

Good Night Out Campaign CIC (training and licensed premises accreditation):
www.goodnightoutcampaign.org

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (for training and campaign support):
www.rasasc.org.uk

Greater Manchester Combined Authority: [Gender Based Violence Strategy – Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

End Violence Against Women (for specialist women's support services):
www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

Suzy Lamplugh Trust (campaigning, education and support with a focus on stalking):
www.suzylamplugh.org

Further reading and resources

Equality and Human Rights Commission – ending sexual harassment at work:
www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ending-sexual-harassment-at-work.pdf

UN Women – towards an end to sexual harassment: www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/11/towards-an-end-to-sexualharassment

House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee – sexual harassment of women and girls in public places:
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/701/701.pdf