

***Street Harassment:
Why are women and girls still dealing with this in Manchester?***

Scope of the Problem:

Safely walking home, getting public transport, going out to see friends, and playing a sport in the dark should not be a privilege. [Article 3](#) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “**We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety**”, women face a continual threat to daily living through street harassment. Street harassment causes constant fear and anxiety in everyday life. [Street harassment is defined](#) as unwanted behaviour and attention in public areas, this includes but is not limited to:

- “unsolicited sexualised or offensive comments or gestures
- unwanted whistling or honking
- so-called 'catcalling'
- indecent exposure
- stalking or being followed
- intrusive persistent sexual advances
- unwanted touching
- being insulted or shouted at
- feeling physically threatened”

Over [71% of women](#) of all ages in the UK have experienced sexual harassment in a public space and this increases to [86% among 18-24 year olds](#). In the UK, even with such high levels of cases over [95% of women](#) did not report the incident of sexual harassment, this increases to [98% of women aged 18-34](#) not reporting their experiences of sexual harassment.

In Greater Manchester, street harassment is understood as a form of gender-based violence (GBV). [Only 6 in 10 men](#) in Greater Manchester think that GBV is a problem that women face. Only [one-third of men](#) have said they challenged a friend who made sexual jokes about women

to other men. In Greater Manchester [2 in 3 men](#) have started to reflect on their behaviour towards women and on average [3 in 4 men](#) agreed that GBV is not acceptable. These are [real experiences](#) that women face in Greater Manchester, this is not something that is beyond our area, this happens here and far too often.

Greater Manchester Efforts:

Although GBV and street harassment sadly is a global epidemic, it is critical that regional preventative implementations are put in place. Greater Manchester has already recognised the importance of tackling this issue.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is committed to mitigating this issue and has created a [Gender Based Violence Strategy in September 2021](#) to tackle GBV. The strategy details taking a preventative, whole systems approach by engaging with the VCSE sector, policing, education and wider policy. Additionally, there is a clear inclusive victim approach where all service provision is responsive to the voices of all victims and survivors. The strategy understands that integrative training is needed with health service professionals to support any cases of GBV.

In line with the strategy, GMCA launched an awareness campaign [#IsThisOK campaign](#) to challenge how normalised street harassment has become and encourage people in the general public to be active bystanders.

Furthermore, Greater Manchester Moving aims to make the streets safer for women and girls by tackling GBV and street harassment, they were awarded £490,448 in 2022 from the [Home Office Safer Streets Fund](#) to fund this work. [Right to Streets Trafford](#) is a movement to promote public safety where everyone can be active and move without restriction. In 2021 Eve Holt, the



Strategic Director at Greater Manchester Moving wrote in the [Right to Streets final report](#):

These streets are ours

Whatever the hour

Ours to jog, march and play

Any time of the night or day

These streets are ours

Whatever we wear

In heels, pumps or boots

Whatever our roots

These streets, parks, public spaces are where we belong...

As part of the Right to the Streets project, in 2023 Greater Manchester Moving created a public campaign in collaboration with DIVA Creative, called #NoPlaceForIt. The picture below is an example of the marketing for the campaign from the [toolkit](#) to help organisations and individuals get more



*Right to the Streets Project:
#NoPlaceForIt Campaign*

involved in the campaign to shape behavioural change.

Furthermore, Manchester City Council have a specific approach to [Women's and Girls' safety](#) which can be coupled with the GMCA's Greater Manchester-wide GBV strategy. This report demonstrates what Manchester City Council have achieved to support women's and Girls' safety and further provision. This report identifies that the council was awarded [White Ribbon Accreditation](#) in March 2021 which demonstrates Manchester City Council's commitment to reducing violence against women and engaging men in this process. Linked to this work, Manchester City Council established in September 2021 a Safety of Women and Girls Steering Group that is responsible for delivering an action plan to prioritise women's and Girls' safety in Manchester. Additionally, Manchester City Council also introduced a [Women's Night Time Safety Charter](#), which aims to resource an on-the-ground initiative to improve safety for women in the night-time economy. It is an initiative that is aimed at employers with a largely female workforce who are working between 6 pm and 6 am.

By engaging with these campaigns on social media, challenging social biases, being active bystanders, talking to people around you about street harassment and amplifying victim voices, you catalyse positive change. Without a preventative, reactive and whole-system approach, we run the risk of regressing and casting a shadow over GBV and street harassment in Greater Manchester.

Calls to Action:

This article urges that the VCSE sector is at the heart of the evaluation of the GBV strategies as the VCSE sector has worked to support the victims and survivors of GBV. This direct contact with people with lived experience is imperative, as their voices demonstrate the true efficacy of the GBV strategy. The VCSE sector should be resourcing to have a direct targeted approach to prioritise women's safety on a multi-system process to analyse both strategy, street provision and support services available in Manchester.

Crucially, there needs to be street outreach and on-the-ground initiatives to prepare for reactive measures to keep women safe, this could be in the form of surveys and focus groups.

These reactive measures need to co-exist with a preventive approach. In line with GMCA's [GBV strategy in 2021](#), taking an approach that collaborates with multiple services in Manchester i.e. police, education and campaigning groups to propel intergenerational social change is the more holistic way forward.

Understanding the needs of women living in Manchester is the only way to translate lived experience into effective policy provision.

Further Engagement:

Campaign Social Media:

Instagram: [@righttothestreets_](#)

Instagram: [@isthisokgm](#)

Podcasts:

[Greater Manchester Moving Podcast:](#) Series 4, Episode 4 discusses the #NoPlaceForIt campaign and its power to shift behaviours

[Greater Manchester Moving Podcast:](#) Series 3 discusses the Rights to the Streets Project

[Greater Manchester Moving Podcast:](#) Using people-powered performance to influence policy

[#IsThisOK Podcast: Youtube Playlist](#)

[#IsThisOK Podcast:](#) Let's Talk About Gender-Based Violence (engaging men into the conversation of street harassment and gender-based violence)

Webinars:

[Right to the Streets Webinar 1](#): Mapping experiences of safety through community data gathering

[Right to the Streets Webinar 2](#): Exploring Women's Safety and Belonging in Public Space

[Right to the Streets Webinar 3](#): Amplifying Advocates for Women's Safety & inclusion in Podcast

[Right to the Streets: Webinar 4](#): Empowering women and girls to be active in their communities

[Right to the Streets: Webinar 5](#): Behaviour change marketing to tackle everyday sexual harassment

[Right to the Streets: Webinar 6](#): Building a community of bystanders to address sexual harassment