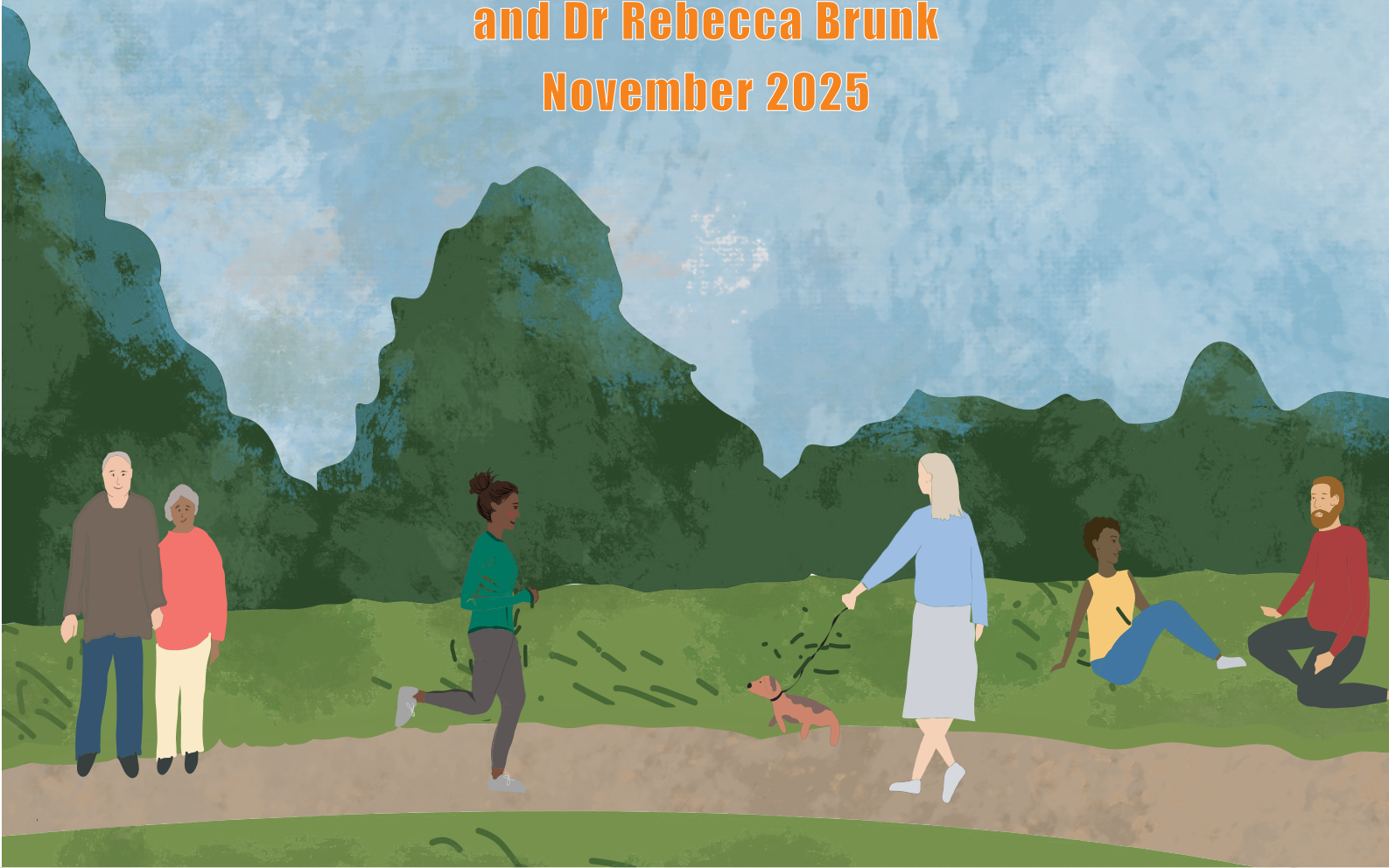


Safer Parks: Fostering a Community of Active Bystanders for the UK's Green Spaces

**Dr Anna Barker
and Dr Rebecca Brunk
November 2025**



Forewords

Our mission is to build a safer society by tackling abuse, aggression, and violence through education, support, and campaigning. We know that too many people, especially women, still face harassment in our public spaces – and this is simply not acceptable.

That's why the Stand Up Against Harassment Training is such an important initiative. It empowers people with the confidence and skills to step in safely, challenge harassment, and offer meaningful support to those affected.

We are proud that, through our partnership with the University of Leeds and Keep Britain Tidy, these crucial tools are now being embedded into parks and green spaces across the UK. This marks an exciting step towards ensuring that everyone can enjoy these spaces with confidence, free from fear.

Lasting change depends on all of us. It's vital that local councils and park services adopt this training as part of their everyday commitment to community safety. Together, we can transform our public spaces into places of respect, support, and safety.

Saskia Garner

Suzy Lamplugh Trust

In the 30th year of the Green Flag Award, access for all and the safety of park users remain central to the aims of the scheme. However, the work of Dr Anna Barker highlighted the fact that women and girls have less access, and many remain subject to sexual harassment in our parks and green spaces, therefore restricting use.

This valuable and insightful active bystander training not only provides staff and volunteers with the tools to challenge such behaviour, but also raises awareness of the frequency of such incidents in our public parks.

The Green Flag Award and Keep Britain Tidy are proud to support this project and will continue to champion the recommendations in this report. We strongly encourage the parks and green space sector to empower staff with the ability and confidence to take action to make our parks safer for women and girls by completing the training and becoming active bystanders.

Paul Todd MBE

Keep Britain Tidy / Green Flag Award

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Executive Summary

The Safer Parks Bystander Project is a national initiative led by the University of Leeds, Keep Britain Tidy, and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to make UK parks and green spaces safer, particularly for women and girls.

Building on earlier Safer Parks research that revealed widespread harassment and fear among female park users, the project aimed to empower park staff, volunteers, and local communities through active bystander training and a public awareness campaign.

The project delivered the Stand Up Against Street Harassment training, based on the 5Ds model—Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct—adapted for park environments. Between October 2024 and September 2025, 245 participants across six regions (Cardiff, Doncaster, Hartlepool, London, Rugby, and Wigan) attended bespoke half-day sessions co-designed using real-world harassment scenarios drawn from women's lived experiences.

Evaluation using before and after training surveys demonstrated significant impact:

- Participants showed large reductions in barriers such as fear of others' reactions and personal safety concerns;
- Confidence in applying the 5Ds increased substantially across all five techniques.

Moreover, 99% rated the training content as good or excellent and 94% felt confident or empowered to act as bystanders.

Qualitative feedback highlighted that participants valued the realistic park-based scenarios, the focus on indirect and interventions, and the sense of shared responsibility for creating safer public spaces. The training also enhanced empathy and understanding of women's experiences and encouraged practical changes such as improved signage, visibility, and community engagement.

A national Safer Parks campaign ran in autumn 2025, promoting free active bystander training, a downloadable toolkit, and awareness materials through social media, posters, and media coverage. The campaign reinforced the message that everyone has a role to play in building respectful, inclusive parks.

Recommendations urge policymakers, parks managers, and communities to embed active bystander training within Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategies, integrate the Safer Parks guidance into park management strategies and plans, and adopt the 5Ds framework across staff training and public engagement.

The project's success demonstrates that practical, evidence-based training and collaborative campaigns can catalyse culture change and ensure that parks remain welcoming and safe for all.

Introduction

The University of Leeds, Keep Britain Tidy, and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust have partnered to deliver active bystander training to park staff, police teams and Friends Of Park groups across England and Wales.

The aim is to improve safety for women and girls who are significantly more likely than men to feel unsafe in parks (ONS, 2022). This fear, often linked to experiences of harassment, causes women to avoid parks, modify their behaviour, or miss out on the health and wellbeing benefits that green spaces offer.

This project follows research led by Dr Anna Barker into women and girls' perceptions and experiences of safety in parks. This found that women often feel unable to challenge harassment or rely on others to intervene, contributing to feeling unsafe in parks, and many had experienced unwanted comments or attention in these spaces (Barker et al., 2022).

'... even if it's not like any physical thing, just the unwanted comments in general, it can just like ruin someone's day or make them not want to go to the parks anymore.'

Teenage girl, Safer Parks research

The research led to the co-creation of guidance for the design and management of parks titled [*Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls*](#) by the Safer Parks Consortium (2025). It acts as supplementary guidance to the [*Green Flag Award*](#) scheme which sets

the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. It has also been endorsed by Police Crime Prevention Initiatives and Secured by Design. A key recommendation in the guidance is to provide active bystander training for parks staff, equipping them with the confidence and skills to safely intervene in instances of harassment.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust delivers Stand Up Against Street Harassment training in collaboration with Right To Be sponsored by L'Oréal Paris. Based on the internationally recognised 5Ds—Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct—this training empowers individuals to intervene safely, with four of the five strategies focusing on indirect actions to avoid escalation. The need for such training is clear: 80% of UK women have experienced public harassment, yet 75% report that no one stepped in (L'Oréal Paris UK, n.d).

To tailor the training to park settings, this ESRC IAA-funded project co-designed harassment scenarios specific to parks, drawing on lived experiences of women and girls from the earlier *Safer Parks* research. These tailored scenarios formed the basis of group discussions aimed at building participants' skills and confidence to intervene. Guided by the 5Ds framework, participants explored a range of bystander intervention strategies.

Dr Anna Barker and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime in West Yorkshire, Alison Lowe MBE



Running from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, this project expanded the training nationally following a successful pilot in West Yorkshire in 2024. The pilot showed strong results: 100% of participants said they would be more likely to intervene after the training, 98% felt more confident, and 96% reported increased knowledge. It was covered by BBC Look North and BBC News online.

This project involved a national roll-out of the training sessions in six additional regions—Cardiff, Doncaster, Hartlepool, London, Rugby, and Wigan—aided by Keep Britain Tidy’s Green Flag Award network.

‘Parks are such important spaces... they need to be safe spaces for women to be, whether they want to cycle or to run or to walk or to sit, you know, safely and without harassment. I think anything that we can do to make women feel safer to use them by themselves, not feel they have got to have a man with them to make them feel safe, but women just to be able to claim that public space is really important.’

Woman, Safer Parks project

The programme’s impact was assessed using pre-test, post-test, and three month follow-up surveys to measure changes in attitudes and behaviours related to bystander intervention. The evaluation was grounded in a theory of change: by providing practical skills and training, the programme aimed to reduce barriers to intervention and boost participants’ confidence in their ability to act safely.

Alongside the training, the project launched a national Safer Parks campaign. The campaign featured powerful posters and engaging digital content co-created with partners and designed by University of Leeds fine art student Alayna Hilmi-Phillips, to encourage park staff, volunteers, and the wider public to get trained and help build a network of confident and empowered active bystanders in the UK’s parks.

This report summarises the project’s activities and outcomes. It begins by describing how the training was co-designed and delivered. It then outlines the project’s evaluation methodology. Next, it presents the key findings from the evaluation. Finally, it highlights the reach and engagement of the national Safer Parks campaign before concluding with recommendations for policy makers, Heads of Service, park staff, Friends of parks groups, training providers, researchers and the general public of park users.

Training

Building on a successful pilot in West Yorkshire, we expanded training delivery to six additional regions across England and Wales: Cardiff (Wales/South West), Doncaster (Yorkshire and the Humber), Hartlepool (North East), Wigan (North West), Rugby (Midlands), and London (South/South East).



A total of 245 participants attended half-day (3 hours) training workshops in these regions. In most regions, the workshops were delivered twice, accommodating 20–40 participants per session. The content of each workshop was structured around three components:

1. Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls

Workshops began with an overview of the *Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls* guidance and its underpinning research, which draws on the lived experiences of women and girls regarding safety in parks.



This guidance demonstrates how thoughtful design, effective management, and proactive maintenance of green spaces can significantly enhance feelings of safety and inclusion for women and girls.

It outlines ten principles across three key themes:



It also features real-world case studies and 'quick wins' to support immediate implementation.

This opening session provided a foundation for participants, situating active bystander training as a key recommendation of the guidance.

It was delivered by Dr Anna Barker (University of Leeds) and Lynsey Atherton and Michele Walde (Keep Britain Tidy).

2. Stand Up Against Street Harassment training

Following the opening session, participants engaged in the *Stand Up Against Street Harassment* training, based on the 5Ds of bystander intervention—a methodology developed by Right To Be and delivered by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust in the UK through sponsorship from L'Oreal Paris.

This programme drives awareness of sexual harassment, and upskills and empowers individuals to help defuse situations, discourage harassers, and support victims.

It is structured into four parts:

1. Deepening understanding of street harassment

The forms, impact, and prevalence of harassment in public spaces and the common barriers to intervening as a bystander.

2. Learning how to intervene if you witness harassment

The 5Ds—Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct—offering simple, often indirect actionable techniques to safely step in when someone else is being harassed.

3. Learning how to respond if you experience harassment

Strategies to protect themselves and seek support when targeted, empowering them to act with greater confidence and agency.

4. Practising the 5Ds through scenario-based learning

Interactive scenarios were co-designed as a new bespoke element of this training to give participants the opportunity to apply the 5Ds in a supportive learning environment, reinforcing their skills and preparedness.

The training was delivered by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

Photos of training:



Scenario-based learning

Scenario-based learning formed a core part of the active bystander training, providing participants with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in realistic, thought-provoking contexts.

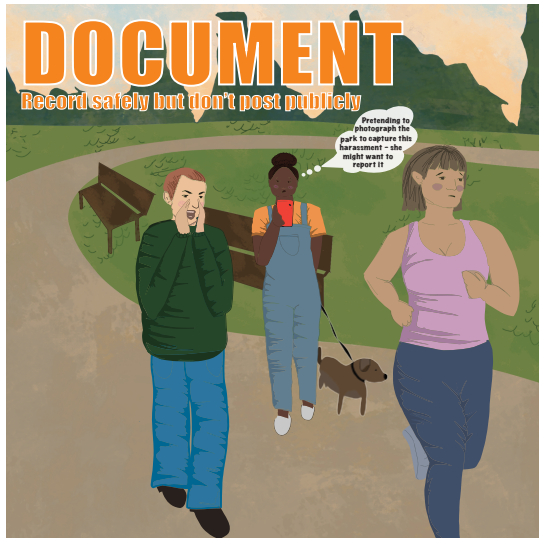
Four bespoke harassment scenarios were co-designed by the project partners in collaboration with park managers and sexual violence prevention experts, drawing directly from the lived experiences of women and girls captured in the earlier *Safer Parks* research.

Recognising the dynamic nature of public park environments, each scenario was purposefully designed to

reflect real-world complexity and ambiguity. Elements such as visibility, time of day, social dynamics, and the physical environment of the park were used to prompt critical reflection on how environmental and situational context shapes perceptions of harassment and potential bystander responses.

Using the 5Ds, participants worked in small groups to consider how a bystander could intervene in these scenarios. Each training session involved discussion of two scenarios, which always included a scenario tailored to a park in their region. The session concluded with a whole-group debrief, creating space to consolidate learning, reflect, and share insights.

Scenario 1 – Location specific



Each training region received a tailored, location-specific scenario to enhance local relevance and engagement.

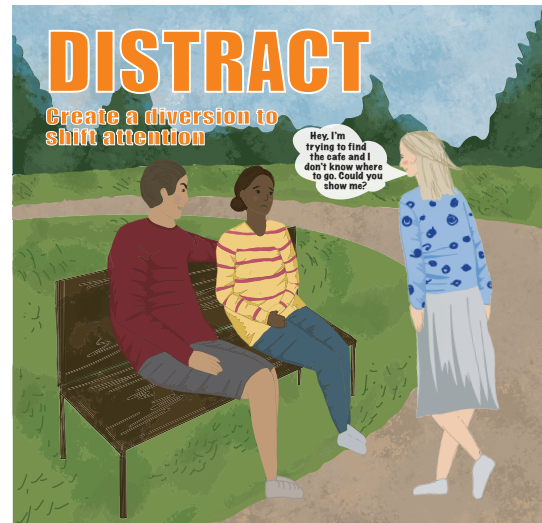
For instance, this scenario was developed for The Regent's Park, London:

It's Sunday morning, and you're enjoying a quiet stroll through The Regent's Park. You reach The Broad Walk, and head towards the Zoo, and you notice a jogger slowing to a walk just ahead of you.

A person whistles and loudly calls out a comment about the jogger's body. The jogger glances back briefly but says nothing, continuing along the path.

Moments later, the person from the bench stands up and begins walking in the same direction, appearing to follow the jogger down the Broad Walk, just a short distance ahead of you.

Scenario 2 – Lone woman

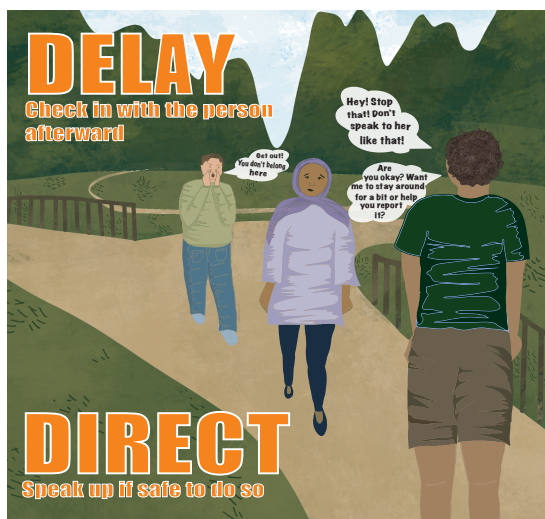


You are walking through your local park and notice, just ahead of you, a woman sitting on a bench by herself.

As you get closer, you see a man approach her, appearing to ask her for the time, she checks her phone and answers him.

You slow your pace, and see that he doesn't walk on, but instead asks if she is waiting for her boyfriend. The woman doesn't respond, clearly not wishing to engage in this conversation, but the man now sits down next to her and asks for her phone number; she turns her gaze away from him and continues to look at her phone, looking uncomfortable.

Scenario 3 – Intersectional harassment



You are supporting a new community session starting in your local park, aimed at getting people walking and talking.

You arrive at the park, and as you spot your group, you also notice a woman walking briskly towards you from another park entrance; she looks worried and keeps looking behind her. Then you hear it....

A short distance behind her, someone is shouting... 'Go on, that's it, get out of here! You don't belong here! We don't want the likes of you here!'

Scenario 4 – Group of harassers*



You and a friend have just finished your dog walk in the park together. You are saying your goodbyes near your friend's car, and you hear some shouting.

A group of people with their hoods up are on bikes, shouting at a group of teenage girls sitting on the playground area. You hear them shout comments about the girls' bodies, telling the girls to 'give them a wiggle'.

**Your safety is the priority, and so a Direct approach is not advisable.*

What do you do if you witness it?

Decide if one of the 5Ds work for you: Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, Direct.

Evaluation

A three-phase survey evaluation was used to measure changes in participants’ perceived barriers to intervention and confidence in their ability to act. Surveys were conducted at three points:

- Pre-test: before the training, to establish a baseline;
- Post-test: immediately after the training, to assess immediate change; and
- Follow-up: three months later, to evaluate longer-term effects.

Each survey included the Bystander Barriers Scale and the Ability to Act Scale.

Bystander Barriers Scale

The Bystander Barriers Scale, originally developed by Latané and Darley (1970), was adapted for the park context to include 19 scale items. These covered five key barriers: barriers to noticing an incident, identifying a risk, taking personal responsibility, acting due to a skills deficit, and audience inhibition. A sixth dimension—*barrier due to safety concerns*—was added following pilot training sessions, where many participants highlighted personal safety as a significant factor influencing their willingness to intervene.

Ability to Act Scale

The Ability to Act Scale was newly developed for this study to measure changes in participants’ confidence to intervene in public space harassment, based on the 5Ds bystander intervention framework. The scale included 14 items covering five key

skills: distract, delegate, document, delay, and direct. Developed by Right To Be, the 5Ds framework is widely used in bystander training programmes; however, at the time of writing, there have been no scholarly evaluations examining attitudes or behaviours linked to this specific skills model.

Scale validation

We refined and validated the scales through a pilot survey with 26 participants and a focus group involving park managers and a volunteer. The pilot tested item wording for clarity, relevance, and sensitivity, while the focus group explored how questions were understood in the park context. Together, these steps ensured the evaluation combined a validated measure of bystander barriers with a new tool aligned to the training’s intended learning outcomes.

Sample

Across six regions in England and Wales, 193 participants completed both pre- and post-training surveys.

Table 1. Sample demographics		
Sample	Predominant Group (n, %)	Non-dominant Groups (n, %)
Gender	Female (118, 61%)	Male (71, 37%)
Ethnicity	White (182, 94%)	Asian or British Asian (5, 3%)
		Mixed/multiethnic (4, 2%)
		Other (1, 0.5%)
Age	45-54 (50, 26%)	35-44 (44, 23%)
		55-64 (35, 18%)
		25-34 (33, 17%)
		65+ (24, 12%)
		18-24 (6, 3%)

Over half of participants (53%, n=103) were employed in parks through management or grounds maintenance roles. Others were involved through volunteering (16%), police or community safety (17%), park-based businesses (3%), urban design (2%), or community engagement and activity programming (6%). A small number (3%) held other or unclassified roles.

Most participants (65%) had not previously received sexual harassment training, highlighting a gap in workforce preparedness. Around one-third (31%) had witnessed harassment, while 27% were unsure—suggesting that some may not recognise certain behaviours as harassment and reinforcing the need for clearer definitions and shared understanding in training.

Analysis

Statistical analysis was used to examine changes in bystander barriers and confidence in ability to act prior to and immediately after receiving training, using the evaluation scales. Future analysis will explore how these changes vary by gender, job role, age, and prior sexual harassment.

Ethics

The project received ethical approval from the University of Leeds Faculty Research Ethics Committee on 15 November 2024 (Ref. 2115).

Participation was voluntary, and completing the training was not dependent on taking part in the surveys.

Limitations

The main limitation of this evaluation is that changes in attitudes and perceptions do not necessarily translate to changes in behaviour. To address this, we collected data on the frequency of bystander actions at both pre-test and follow-up stages to assess whether participants reported increased intervention in the three months following the training. However, these behavioural changes cannot be solely attributed to the training, as various external factors influence whether an individual has the opportunity to act as an active bystander, beyond their skills and confidence.

An additional limitation of the study is that, during analysis, we found the questions used to assess the 'personal responsibility' barrier lacked sufficient stability for further analysis, leading to its exclusion from this report's results. This is likely due to our choice to reduce the number of items related to this barrier from the original scale for use in our survey. We made a choice to keep the length of the survey more manageable for participants, however this resulted in our questions likely not capturing the full extent of the barrier that was proposed in previous studies.

Findings

This section presents the findings of our evaluation of the training, organised into four areas: perceptions of the active bystander training, feedback on scenario-based learning, the impact of training on bystander attitudes and confidence, and whether the training causes any backlash. We then present findings from participant feedback of the Safer Parks guidance

Perceptions of the active bystander training

Participants highly rated their engagement with the training:



Key takeaways

Six key takeaways emerged based on thematic analysis of 169 qualitative responses:

1. Awareness of the 5Ds framework.

The 5Ds framework (Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, Direct) was repeatedly referenced as a memorable

and useful tool giving clear, structured strategies to choose from.

"As parks staff, I have a lot of options at my disposal... I can draw on my own experience when thinking of ways to distract/delegate/document/delay and intervene directly." – Training participant

2. Value in using indirect actions to intervene safely.

A key insight was that intervention doesn't have to be direct or confrontational. Learning subtle, creative methods, especially distraction, helped participants feel safer and more confident in their ability to act.

"You don't need to be confrontational to help a situation."

"Subtle intervention can be as valuable as direct intervention."

"Distraction is as good as direct

3. Increased confidence and empowerment to act.

Many reported increased confidence in their ability to act when witnessing harassment. They felt more prepared and reassured that even small actions can make a difference.

"I developed a confidence for dealing with harassment that I never thought I could have attained in such a short time."

4. Importance of context and individual capacity.

"There are so many ways to handle a situation and they differ each time depending on your own personal circumstance."

Participants understood the complexity of intervening. Situational contexts (e.g. location, presence of colleagues, perceived severity) and individual capacity (e.g. confidence, clarity, role authority) play a significant role in whether someone feels able to act.

Participants appreciated the training's range of interventions, which allowed them to choose responses that aligned to their role and capacity while still contributing to a safer park.

5. Emphasis on maintaining personal safety while supporting others.

"There are so many ways to intervene whilst keeping myself safe."

Attendees appreciated that the training prioritised personal safety. Knowing that interventions can be effective without putting themselves at risk made them more confident in their ability to act.

6. Stronger sense of shared responsibility for safety in public.

Participants left with a greater sense of personal and collective responsibility to safely disrupt harassment. Many planned to share the learning with

others and apply it in their communities, especially in parks and public spaces.

"We all have a role to play in the safety of our parks."

"I can help in a safe way and make a difference."

"I could be the catalyst for more bystanders."

Scenario-based learning

Participants found discussion of the scenarios in parks highly valuable. Four key themes emerged based on thematic analysis of 161 qualitative responses.

1. Realistic scenarios helped apply skills to daily work.

"Using examples from the park made it more practical—it's easier to put the training into action when you can picture it happening in your own space."

Participants found that because the scenarios had familiar, parks-based contexts, they were better able to visualise themselves in the situations. This made the learning feel more practical and helped to bridge the gap between abstract training content and real-world action.

2. Scenarios supported deeper understanding of women's lived experiences.

"The scenarios helped me to step into someone else's shoes and understand why certain behaviours can feel threatening."

Knowing that the scenarios were designed from actual conversations with women and girls helped participants to better understand what it can feel like to be a woman in a public space. They illustrated how certain situations or behaviours, which might initially feel minor to participants, could be threatening or uncomfortable. These scenarios helped build empathy and awareness.

3. Group discussions helped participants gain new perspectives.

Building on the insights from the scenarios, the group discussion format deepened participants' understanding. Many valued hearing how others—particularly women and people of different ages and genders—perceive and respond to harassment.

“You get other people’s opinions and points of view that I wouldn’t consider.”

“A different viewpoint to my male stance.”

“Being a woman who works in parks, it was good to discuss experience with other women and non-women in this context.”

Impact of training on bystander barriers and confidence

The survey results before and after the training show clear improvements in how participants perceive common barriers to intervening in harassment situations. After the training, participants were more likely to notice when harassment was happening, better able to identify when someone

might be at risk, and reported fewer concerns about their own safety or how others might react if they stepped in.

Table 2 shows the average scores before and after training for each of the five types of barriers. Lower scores after training reflect a reduction in that barrier. The final column shows how much change occurred, with colour coding to indicate whether the change was medium or large in size.

Participants reported especially large improvements in feeling less worried about others’ reactions (*audience inhibition*). Safety concerns and difficulty noticing or identifying harassment also decreased. Together, these changes suggest that the training helped reduce the common fears or uncertainties that can prevent people from acting.

Table 2. Training decreases barriers to bystander intervention

Barrier Type	Time point	Average Score	Training Impact
Barrier to Noticing	Before training	2.63	Medium decrease
	After training	2.00	
Barrier to Identifying Risk	Before training	3.03	Medium decrease
	After training	2.50	
Barrier from Audience Inhibition	Before training	2.37	Large decrease
	After training	1.61	
Barrier from Safety Concerns	Before training	3.08	Medium decrease
	After training	2.47	

Note. These findings are from the analysis of before and after training surveys. Analysis of the full dataset,

including comparisons with 3-month follow-up surveys, will be published in upcoming academic papers.

Table 3. Training increases confidence with bystander intervention skills

Intervention Skill	Time point	Average Score	Training Impact
Overall confidence in skills	Before training	3.01	Large increase
	After training	4.54	
Distract	Before training	2.99	Medium to Large increase
	After training	3.60	
Delegate	Before training	2.78	Large increase
	After training	3.56	
Document	Before training	2.85	Medium to Large increase
	After training	3.53	
Delay	Before training	2.84	Large increase
	After training	3.70	
Direct	Before training	2.34	Large increase
	After training	3.22	

The training also helped participants feel more confident overall in their ability to take action when needed, as well as more confident using a range of practical skills to respond to sexual harassment. We measured bystanders' confidence in their overall skills (e.g. 'I have the ability to help someone experiencing harassment') as well as confidence specifically using the 5Ds.

Table 3 shows the average scores before and after training for each of these skills. Higher scores after training mean greater confidence. The final column shows the size of the improvement,

using colour coding to highlight whether the change was medium or large.

All five bystander strategies showed clear increases in confidence after the training. The greatest improvements were seen in using Direct, Delegate, and Delay skills. These results suggest that participants came away with a stronger belief in their ability to step in and support others using a variety of safe and effective techniques.

Does training cause backlash?

We also looked at whether the training had any negative effects, such as causing people to feel more resistant to taking action or less willing to help. Using a recognised method from previous research (Moynihan et al., 2011), we found that only a very small number of participants (less than 7%) showed any signs of change in the wrong direction.

This suggests that the training not only helped build confidence and reduce barriers, but did so without causing harm or pushback among participants.

Safer Parks guidance

Participants reported that the guidance was a useful resource. Among 143 responses, three key themes emerged, highlighting the specific ways in which the guidance was valued.

1. Practical Design for Safer Parks

The guidance offered specific and low-cost options for implementing changes, which could enhance perceptions of safety in the green spaces they manage or volunteered in. This included trimming vegetation along paths to

improve visibility, offering women-only walking groups, adding time and distance information to signage and incorporating the 5Ds into internal policies or volunteer training.

"Little things like adding the times to get to specific locations on finger posts are easy ways we can make our parks safer."

Participants not directly involved in the management of parks or green spaces still found the guidance applicable when thinking about how their own programmes or activities could change to better support women and girls.

"We are a company that have permission to deliver activities in parks that we don't manage. We would do our activities near entrances, we would wear high-vis vests to be more visible if anyone needed our help. We would engage with women and youth groups in our community to inform them of when we would be at the parks."

2. Seeing a Different Perspective

The guidance prompted participants to reflect on how women and girls experience parks differently and to question their own assumptions about who public spaces are designed for. This encouraged a broader and more inclusive outlook to the design of parks.

"Interesting to realise that parks aren't always designed for girls and women to feel safer and to look on the parks with fresh eyes."

"I hadn't considered that parks were designed more with male activities in mind like sports and not accessible for girls and women."

3. Empowerment through Evidence

The guidance offered a clear, evidence-based framework grounded in the real experiences of women. They noted that this gave them greater confidence and clarity in how they could help create safer parks.

Many participants committed to sharing the guidance with colleagues, managers or partner organisations in the hope of influencing practice, investment or policy decisions. For some, this also included encouraging others to complete the online bystander training as a complement to the guidance.

"It will help me reinforce changes I'd like to see within parks from my role working in parks service. Having evidence to back up issues we're aware of gives us a more solid argument."

Some participants also highlighted challenges around immediate action on implementing the guidance. These included funding constraints, lack of direct authority, or the nature of the green spaces they worked in (e.g. conservation areas). While these respondents were less certain about how they could incorporate the guidance, many still expressed an increased awareness and willingness to advocate for change.

"The area in which I volunteer is a semi-ancient woodland, so there is not much we can do about signage, lighting etc. in the woodlands, but there might be some action we could take."

Campaign

Expanding on the delivering of the training across the six regions, the project partners delivered a four-week national campaign from 17 September to 15 October 2025 to raise awareness of harassment and foster a community of active bystanders for the UK's parks and green spaces.

The central message of the campaign was that everyone has a role to play in creating safer, more inclusive parks. By equipping park staff, volunteers, police and community safety teams and park users with the confidence and practical skills to intervene safely using the 5Ds framework, the campaign fostered a shared sense of responsibility for ensuring that parks are welcoming and respectful spaces for all.

Key activities

1. Free bystander training

We promoted free active bystander training to park-based audiences.



To access the toolkit and resources, visit the campaign webpage at <https://www.greenflagaward.org/safer-parks-campaign-toolkit>

2. Campaign toolkit

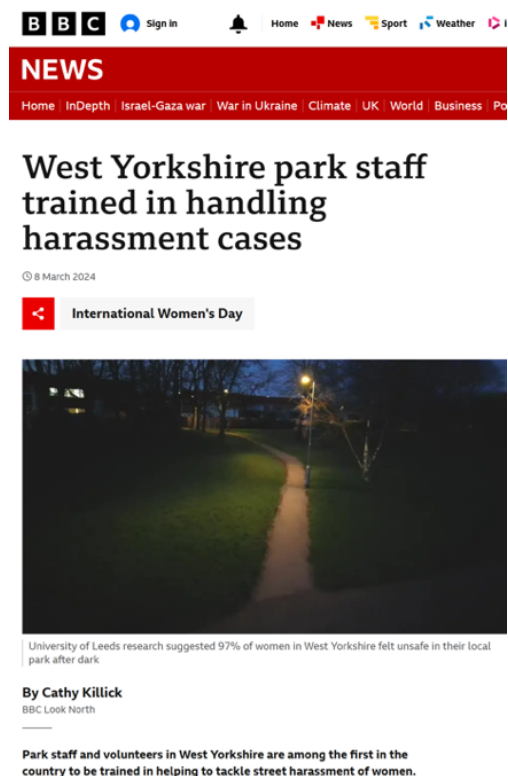
To support local action, a toolkit was made freely available to help others spread the word, and included:

- Four engaging posters each depicting a different 5D, with QR codes linking to the training.
- A ready-to-use social media asset pack for X, LinkedIn, BlueSky, and Instagram.
- The Safer Parks guidance, along with translated executive summaries in Urdu, Romani, and Arabic to support accessibility across communities.

3. Public and policy engagement

We facilitated broad engagement through a multi-channel approach, including:

- Posters displayed in parks, council buildings, and community settings.
- Social media activity using hashtags #SaferParks #StandUpAgainstStreetHarassment.
- Direct outreach to local councils, Friends' groups, and policing teams encouraged adoption of campaign resources and training.
- BBC London news and online coverage



Campaign Reach

The campaign had wide reach across the UK. Through a strong digital presence, we saw high engagement with social media content, helping to extend our message well beyond immediate networks.

Interest in the campaign translated into action, with a notable increase in registrations for online training sessions and a rise in organisations booking in-person sessions for their teams — momentum that will continue into the next year.



Many organisations actively supported the initiative — sharing posts online, blogs on their webpages and promoting the campaign locally. A huge thank you to everyone who:

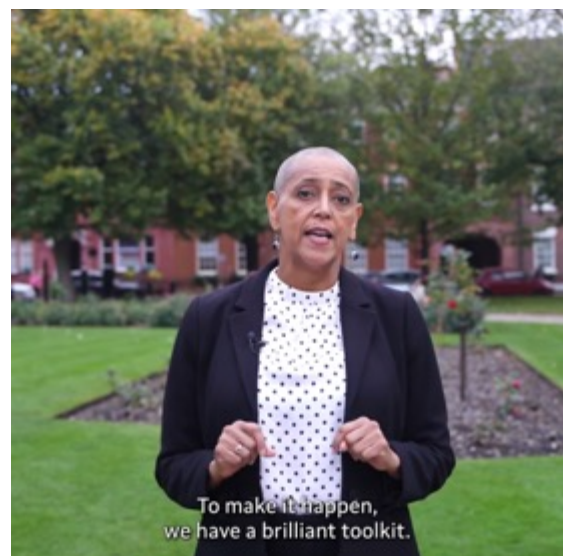
- 🌳 Delivered the campaign in their local areas
- 📢 Spread the word online
- 🎓 Completed the online training
- 👥 Booked in-person sessions for their teams
- 😊 Displayed posters and shared the Safer Parks guidance

Because of your efforts, hundreds of park staff, volunteers, and visitors are now better equipped to act as active bystanders — helping to build a culture where harassment is not ignored and everyone feels safer in public green spaces.

Our mission continues, and training remains free for all who wish to take part.



Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime in West Yorkshire, Alison Lowe MBE



Recommendations

The partners co-designed the recommendations. Complex actions often create lasting, system-wide change but may take longer to deliver. Moderate actions build structure and consistency. Quick wins are simple, visible steps that help build early momentum.

Policy Makers (including Home Office, MHCLG)

Recommendation	Level
Embed active bystander approaches within national VAWG strategies and Safer Streets mission, recognising parks as distinct spaces.	Complex
Ensure new parks strategies include the need for bystander training and VAWG prevention as part of accessibility and equity goals.	
Provide dedicated funding for safer park design and management, including more visible staff, to improve safety for women and girls.	
Ensure funded scalable active bystander refresher courses are available and evaluate existing online booster modules.	Moderate
Adopt a national measure of bystander readiness (e.g. skills and confidence indicators) to track progress and compare sites.	Quick wins

Parks Managers / Heads of Service

Recommendation	Level
Embed the Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls guidance across policies, strategies, practices, and budgets, ensuring it is integrated within park management plans to support the achievement of targets.	Complex
Create clear safety protocols for incidents in parks and coordinated responses with wider partners to address VAWG and public safety.	
Require park contractors to complete bystander training, with this included in procurement clauses.	
Champion safety and harassment prevention as core organisational values.	Moderate
Make active bystander training mandatory for current and new staff and include refresher sessions.	
Adopt the 5Ds framework, supported by onboarding and visual reminders (e.g. posters).	
Develop systems to record and monitor harassment incidents and bystander interventions in parks, providing evidence to inform future interventions, funding decisions, and partnership work.	
Use staff and park user feedback to track progress and impact.	
Extend training opportunities and share learning across departments (e.g. street scene, community safety), Friends of Parks groups and contractors.	
Use communication campaigns to promote safe, respectful parks and encourage active bystander training among park users and communities. Messaging should emphasise the role of bystanders, park staff, and	Quick wins

communities in creating safer environments.	
Arrange a free bystander training session for your team.	

Park staff and Friends of Groups

Recommendation	Level
Take the free 30-minute online bystander training or arrange an in-person session for your team.	Quick wins
Report harassment incidents and bystander interventions via organisation's protocols.	
Apply the 5Ds framework in your day-to-day work or volunteering.	
Share learning and promote collective responsibility for safety.	
Promote bystander training through social media, posters in parks or community networks.	
Check in with anyone who may have been harassed and offer support afterwards.	

Training providers

Recommendation	Level
Use realistic, park-based scenarios and discussions to build practical skills.	Moderate
Adapt content for groups with lower baseline confidence or experience.	
Emphasise the indirect interventions, which are often practical for many learners.	Quick wins

Researchers / Evaluators

Recommendation	Level
Use experimental or matched comparison designs to evaluate training outcomes.	Complex

Explore gender-specific or situational barriers to bystander action.	Moderate
Use adapted item scales (e.g. 5Ds or barriers-to-intervention scales) to assess training impact.	Quick wins
Include parks as distinct environments in harassment surveys.	

Green Flag Award

Recommendation	Level
Recognise parks where staff have completed active bystander training.	Quick wins
Promote bystander training within Green Flag Award guidance to ensure park staff are equipped to intervene safely and appropriately.	
Signpost to active bystander training in Green Flag Award Academy.	

General public / park users

Recommendation	Level
Take the free 30-minute online active bystander training.	Quick wins
Check in with anyone you think may have been harassed and offer support.	
Use the 5Ds framework when visiting parks, choosing safe and proportionate actions.	
Promote and encourage others to complete the training.	
Report incidents to improve understanding of safety issues.	

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