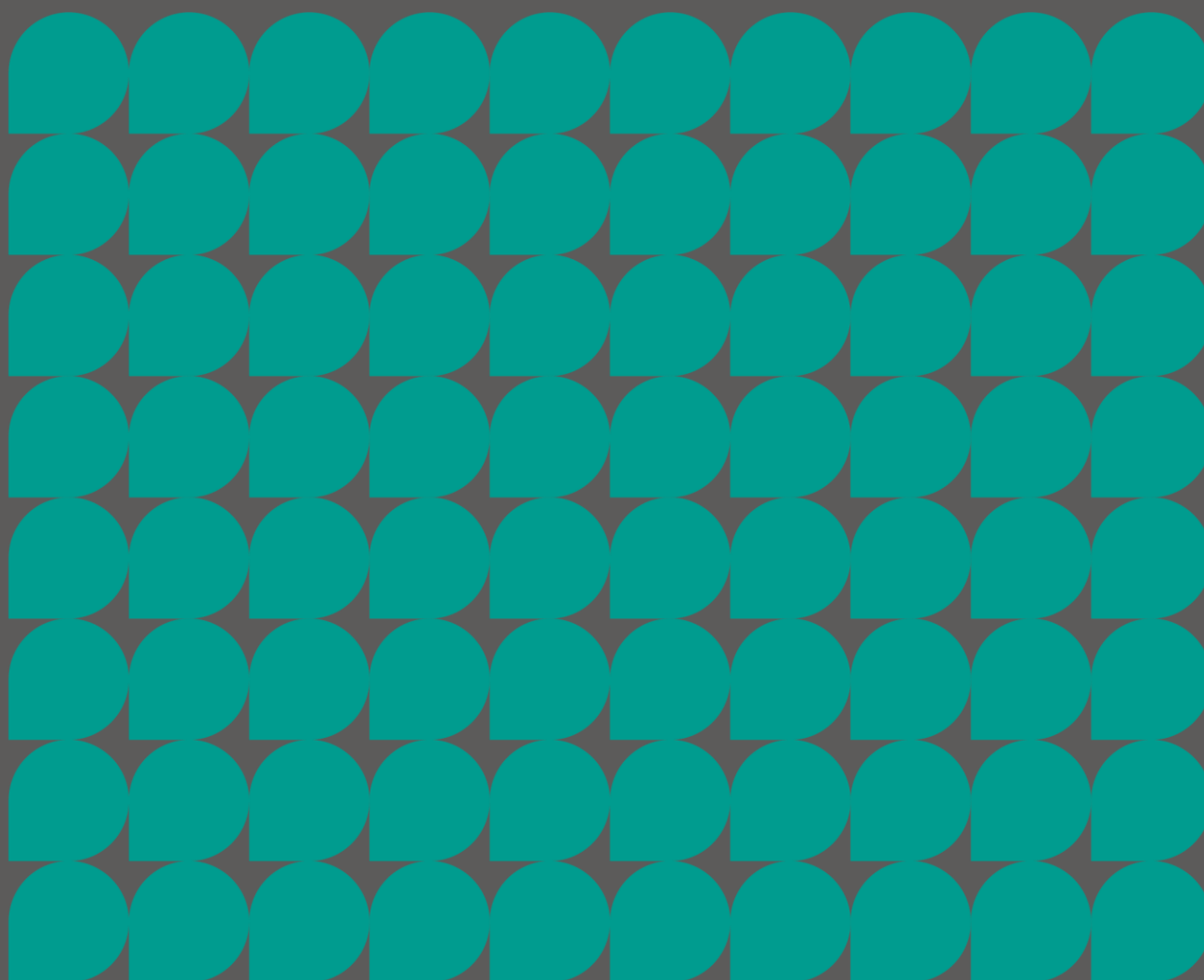


In Her Shoes

A review of Safety of Women and Girls on Public
Transport

July 2025



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Chair's Foreword

Violence against women and girls is a national emergency!

Violence against women and girls is accepted.

We are tired of people in power making bold headline-grabbing statements. We are tired of reading policy where the needs of women and girls are a footnote. We are tired of women and girls being last in the queue. We are tired of having to repeat ourselves, again, and again, and again. And again.



Cllr Helen Hibbert

Stockport

Of rolling our eyes and moving on. Quietly, saying nothing, because it is 'the norm'.

We are tired of having to risk assess every environment, every interaction. Of having to censor ourselves to avoid dangerous situations. Of having to constantly consider how we present ourselves to the world, just in case someone else considers it an invitation.

We are tired of being nice, of being understanding, of moderating our anger. Of smiling through fear so we aren't assaulted, and of that smile being misunderstood.

We are tired of being the victim and the problem.

I am aware that this introduction does not follow the usual framing of reports such as this. That is deliberate. Because I am also tired of having to frame my frustration into language acceptable to those who have the ability to change it.

The fact is that issues affecting women and girls have become background noise; constant, always there and ultimately forgettable. Our ability to drown out fundamental issues no longer shocks us. That these issues affect everyone; our partners, wives, daughters, sisters and mums, family and friends alike, appears not enough of a motivator to drive us to change.

The sad fact is that gender-based violence is accepted. Sexual assault and rape and the threat of sexual assault and rape have been a constant in women's lives forever, used by friend and foe as a way to control and subjugate. And the responsibility has fallen on women to keep ourselves safe; that if something happens to us, it is our fault. The blame and guilt is ours to hold.

And it pervades every aspect of our lives. This review was necessary and, considering global events, timely. We were aware during this review that Greater Manchester has a gender-based violence (GBV) strategy, launched in September 2021, and I am very grateful to the Safer & Stronger Communities Team at the GMCA for giving so much of their time and experience to this review and want to thank them personally for their passion and commitment to reducing GBV. It was impossible for us to tackle every aspect, and therefore, this review has focused on just one aspect of it; that is to see it through the lens of travel and transport. Because the fear of being assaulted, raped or killed, dominates the decisions we make, and how we live our lives and especially when making decisions on how to travel safely.

It is clear that much is happening already across GM and there is a will to move further and faster. But the extent to which this strategy is known about, the extent to which this is prioritised within our Local Authorities is unclear. And GMCA, whilst acting as a leader, cannot do this alone. We need direct concerted action within each of the Local Authorities to bring this about. We must share the action collectively to bring about the change needed.

All of us have agency here; we all have the ability to change our society for the better. We are not alone when we stand together.

I am tired of being given a place in society and expected to stay in it.

I won't.

Will you?

I would like to thank all those who took part in this review, who gave their time,

energy and expertise to make this report as impactful as we hope it is.

Comments from Chair of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Nadim Muslim

Bolton

I am delighted to see the findings of the task and finish group come together in this review. Addressing the needs and barriers faced by women and girls in accessing public transport is crucial to achieving the goal of 50% of all journeys being by sustainable transport by 2040. The reviews holistic approach examines the entire journey and has highlighted that without safe and accessible transport, women and girls are missing out on education, healthcare, and employment opportunities,

which can have long-term economic and social consequences. Furthermore, the economic growth driven by improved public transport can lead to significant benefits for all in Greater Manchester, including job creation, increased productivity, and enhanced business opportunities.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who contributed to this review, especially the elected members who have driven this piece of work.

1. Introduction, Membership and Scope

- 1.1. 51% of GM residents are women and girls. They make up the highest proportion of bus passengers and around half of tram passengers yet feel much less safe than males travelling on the Bee Network.
- 1.2. The GM Mayor in his Manifesto recognised that all our ambitions for Greater Manchester won't be achieved unless people have a sense of safety in their homes, communities and as they travel across our city-region.
- 1.3. Standing Together, the Greater Manchester Policing Plan (2024-29) prioritises transport safety and the reduction of gender-based violence - *we will work closely with TfGM, GMP and others to develop a comprehensive strategy with the ambition of making our public transport system the safest in the world and Ensure the full force of the law is applied to prolific perpetrators of gender-based violence who cause high harm, to stop them offending.*
- 1.4. Latest data shows that there are 5.6 million trips on public transport taken by GM residents on a typical day, that comes to 2 billion a year¹. However, in the GM Residents Survey², 43% of public transport users who do not use public transport said they had a need to do so. 54% of these people said the reason that they do not use public transport after 6pm is because of safety concerns. Manchester City Council's own consultation in 2023 further illustrated that the majority of people surveyed felt the least safe on public transport.
- 1.5. Globally, personal safety is the most widespread concern for women when travelling.³ In 2018, the International Transport Forum identified women's safety and security as a public transport priority.
- 1.6. Research highlights the differences in mobility patterns between men and

¹ <https://tfgm.com/trads>

² <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/2i2lbnvt/w14-gmca-full-report-v3-002.pdf>
(September 2024)

³ Ng, W.-S., & Ashley, A. (2018). Understanding Urban Travel Behaviour by Gender for Efficient and Equitable Transport Policies. Paris: OECD.

women, with women facing a greater overall 'travel burden.' Women's travel is inherently complex, influenced by the activities they engage in and the experiences they encounter. They are more likely to travel outside peak hours, making them reliant on infrequent services. The destinations women travel to, often for work, healthcare, or child-related services, are frequently underserved by public transport, necessitating multiple transfers, waiting between services, and longer journey times.

- 1.7. In 2021 the Suzy Lamplugh Trust undertook research which reported that 88% of women respondents has experienced some form of unwanted behaviour on public transport in the past five years, with the most common behaviours being staring, intimidating, sitting or standing right next to someone and verbal abuse⁴.
- 1.8. A study of 28 global cities found that sexual harassment was one of the most common concerns, ranging from catcalling and seemingly innocuous “banter” to men exposing themselves and groping women⁵.
- 1.9. Historically, society places the responsibility on a woman to keep herself safe. As a result, women make travel decisions based on the strategies they have developed, avoiding travel at night, carrying car keys as a makeshift weapon etc. Fortunately, for most women and girls' violence and unwanted behaviours do not happen every day, but the impact of such experiences, whether direct or indirect are felt every day. Most men are not aware of how women feel when risk assessing their journey or how the impact of each incident, no matter how big or small, has on her future decision making.
- 1.10. Targets for increased numbers of sustainable journeys on our public transport network and through active travel are non-achievable if the fundamental issue of feeling safe is not addressed.
- 1.11. Safety issues are not confined to using public transport but extend to the

⁴ <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/national-personal-safety-day-2021-campaign>

⁵ Allen, H (2016) Why Women Feel Unsafe on Public Transport

journey to and from a stop or station. In many cases, this first or last part of the journey is a women's primary concern and can be the reason for avoiding public transport. It is important to consider the journey from door to door and all the active travel elements that create the whole end-to-end route.

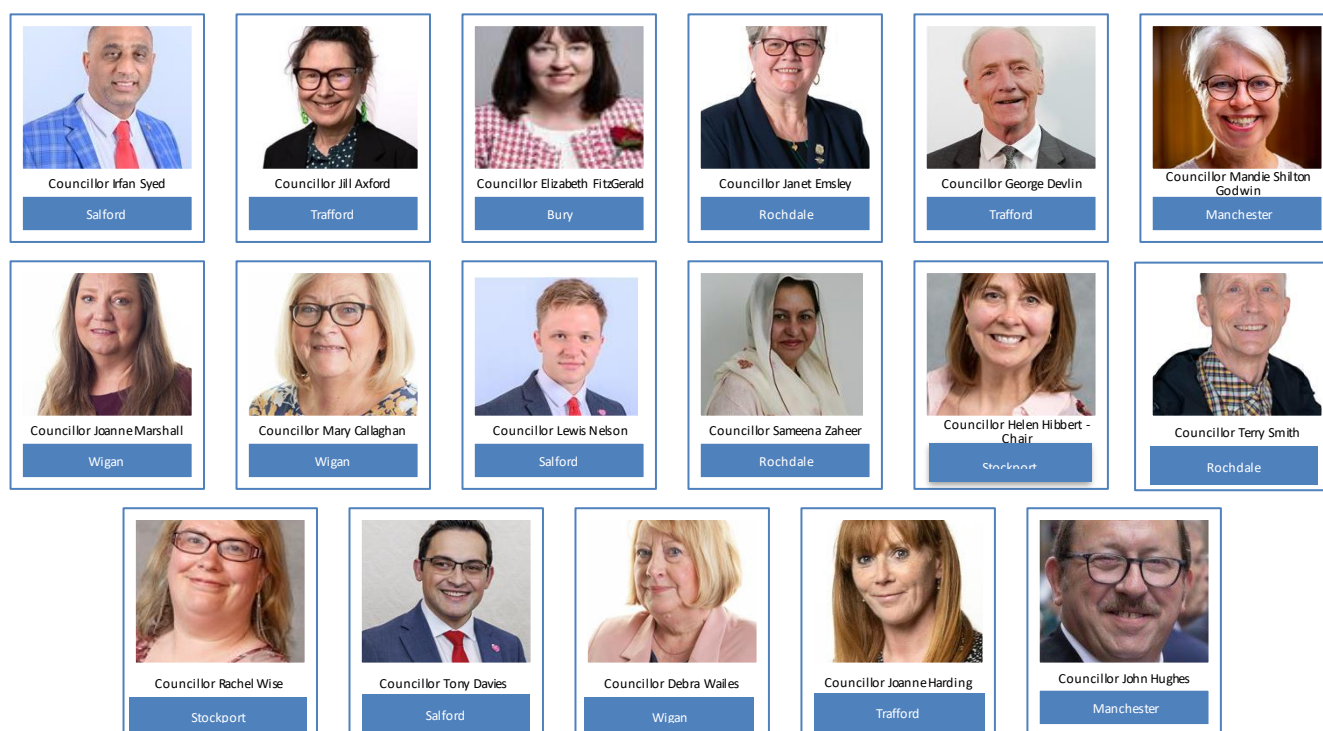
- 1.12. If women felt safe walking, cycling and undertaking other forms of active travel, there would not only be wider personal health benefits, but also environmental benefits as they would not need to use their cars. The Active Travel in Greater Manchester Annual Report⁶ (2024) states for far too long, active travel infrastructure has been designed for the minority who are doing it already, when what is needed is infrastructure which everyone finds attractive, and safe to use.
- 1.13. The current Local Transport Plan – Greater Manchester Transport Strategy (2040) only makes one reference to the safety of women and girls in a note that women's perception of personal security is significantly lower than men's.
- 1.14. Women are entitled to a public transport system that gets them where they need to go safely. In order to do so, there is work needed to re-shape what it is like to travel around Greater Manchester and the behaviours that are expected of the travelling public.

Membership and scope

- 1.15. The GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee is made up of twenty elected councillors (and twenty substitutes) from across Greater Manchester. At the beginning of this municipal year, the Committee was asked to consider what issues it felt were of the most significance to residents and which issues would benefit most from a task and finish approach, whereby a small number of committee members could consider the issue through a deep dive over a number of sessions.

⁶ <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s35711/06%2002.%20Greater%20Manchester%20Active%20Travel%20Annual%20Report%202024.pdf>

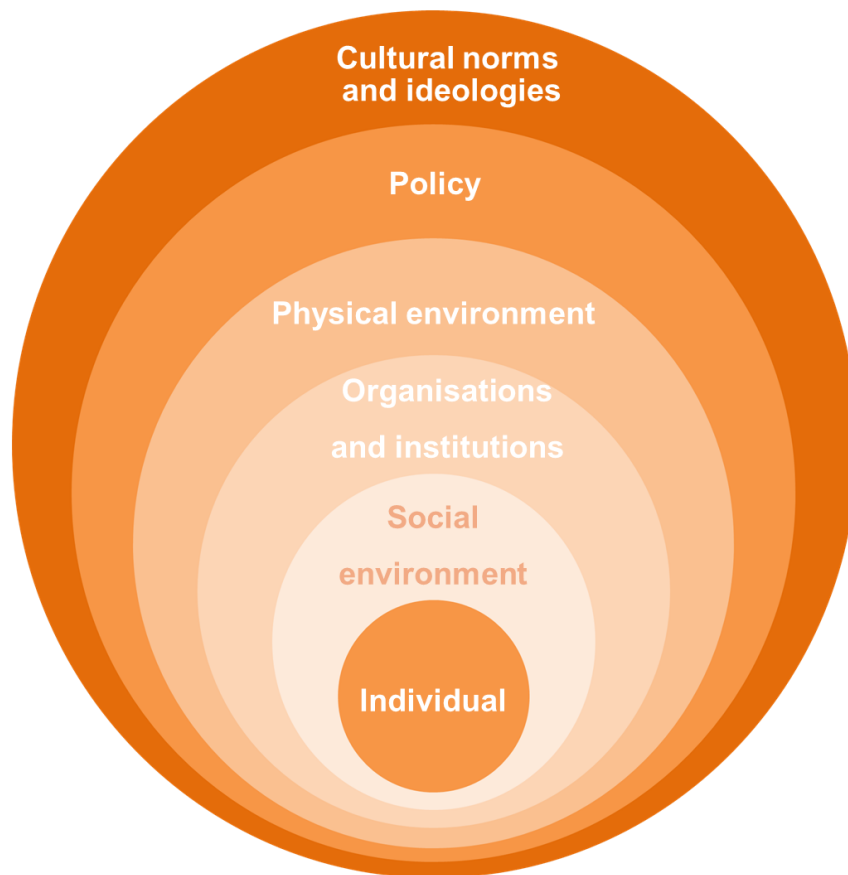
1.16. Responses evidenced that the safety of women and girls was the topic that necessitated a task and finish review and in recognition of its read across with several GM portfolio areas, representatives from the Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel and the Greater Manchester Health Scrutiny Committee were invited to take part. As a result, the following 17 members put themselves forward, bringing with them a mix of geographic, political and lived experience from their individual backgrounds. Some of their own personal stories are reflected in this review.



1.4 To begin their investigations, members met with lead officers from the Combined Authority to understand the issue of violence against women and girls in its widest sense before looking to scope the review. Members specifically wanted to select an area where they could add the most value and have the most influence over ensuring the delivery of the recommendations. Therefore, selected travel and transport which was referenced in the Gender

Based Violence Delivery Plan⁷ but as it was a recent addition, had the potential to be directed further by this review.

- 1.5 In order to affect the most change simultaneously there needs to be whole system approach to this issue. This means shifting levers in relation to the individual, social environment, organisations & institutions, physical environment, policy and culture norms & ideologies all at the same time.



- 1.6 This review has used the socio-economic model to explain exactly how to create a whole system approach to the issue of safety of women and girls on our transport system and beyond. Breaking it down into six areas helps the system wide issue not to feel overwhelming or too challenging and emphasises the shared ownership required at each level by stakeholders in that area.

⁷ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/zbqas3m5/gbv-delivery-plan-2024-26-a2.pdf>

Recommendations

Strategic priorities

- 1. Clearly define for everyone what constitutes inappropriate and unwanted behaviour so there is no ambiguity – any behaviour which makes a woman feel uncomfortable.**
- 2. Secure and clarify long term and consistent funding that enables the required step change to see the safety of women and girls engrained throughout the design of spaces.**
- 3. Ensure political and organisational leadership so that the safety of women and girls becomes inherent across all GM portfolio areas, across all Local Authorities and across each area of the socio-economic model to enable real system change.**
- 4. Develop and agree a design guide that incorporates the latest thinking on a gender informed approach and will apply to future development in public spaces across Greater Manchester.**
- 5. Prioritise reliability to reduce the hesitancy of women and girls to choose public transport as a safe option.**
- 6. Create spaces through the Live Well initiative where men and boys can comfortably learn to be who they really are through the influence of strong role models**

Short-term actions

- 7. Amplify the messaging of the #isthisok campaign with a particular focus on the places where men are regularly present, i.e. places of work and places of leisure.**

- 8. Increase the visibility of GMP's TravelSafe LiveChat service on each tab on the Bee Network app so that it is clearer how to report incidents and ensure that the minimal amount of questions are asked of the victim/witness.**
- 9. Increase the presence of staff throughout the network, especially in the evening or around large-scale events.**
- 10. Provide accurate real time information on the Bee Network app, at stops and on vehicles to ensure that women and girls can make decisions that increase their feeling of safety.**
- 11. Calculate at a national level the economic loss from women and girls not accessing education, training and work due to the feeling of being unsafe, to demonstrate the need for investment.**
- 12. Use licensing training should be as an outlet to promote the messaging of the #isitok campaign in order to inform taxi drivers of appropriate behaviour and how to take action if they witness inappropriate behaviour.**
- 13. Ensure that safety messaging is a continuous thread through all communications across the Bee Network infrastructure, from on-board screens to Metrolink stops. Isolated campaigns are not enough.**

Medium-term goals

- 14. Introduce additional features to the Bee Network app that provides advice, support and information on safe spaces for women who feel vulnerable when walking alone so that it is co-located with travel information and a reporting feature.**
- 15. Empower those staff to intervene in situations through the right training and legislation that supports them to undertake their role.**

- 16. Introduce “ask for angel street” style scheme across the whole Bee Network, alongside a high-level campaign to support its implementation.**
- 17. Develop and enable a shared dataset to help organisations accurately assess safety concerns across demographics, enabling targeted solutions.**
- 18. Conduct an audit of all public transport infrastructure, beginning with interchanges, to identify any changes that can be made to make women and girls feel safer.**
- 19. Enhance MBacc opportunities for engineering, planning and architectural roles to enable a future generation of female place creators.**
- 20. Ensure all taxi drivers are registered in Greater Manchester and appropriately vetted. There should be no opportunities for national licensing.**

Longer term ambitions

- 21. Develop conflict resolution skills through opportunities to teach young people about how to have respectful difficult conversations rather than choosing violence through the provision of adapted training programmes.**
- 22. Ensure that active bystander training is accessible for all who want to access it, recognising the ripple effect in cultivating a more supportive bystander culture.**
- 23. Listen to insight gathered and not just what the data appears to be showing, to ensure issues are investigated as appropriate.**

- 24. Invest in a fully integrated CCTV system across the public transport network, local authorities and partner organisations to ensure that the network is truly integrated.**
- 25. Pursue aspirations for purple flag accreditation for all GM towns to publicly evidence our ambition for a safer nighttime economy.**
- 26. Continue to seek best practice from across the world as to how to consider policy changes from the perspective of creating a safe environment for women and girls.**

2. Individual

- 2.1 The socio-economic model reflects that the individual is at the centre of most complex issues, in recognition of this, we should begin with how the individual can play their role in improving the feeling of safety for women and girls as they move across Greater Manchester.
- 2.2 There is a role for each and every person in reflecting a zero-tolerance approach.
- 2.3 Any behaviours which make a woman or girl feel intimidated, threatened or scared should be called out as inappropriate and unwanted. There should be no ambiguity in relation to behaviours such as catcalling or wolf-whistling which can be defended as 'just a joke' or 'a sign of admiration' because they are in fact forms of violence.

I have been inappropriately touched by a male in a pub, he was in really close proximity, and he was pushing against me – I think I did what a lot of women do, I froze. I did remove myself, but it was a really frightening experience.

Everyday life for a lot of women. Cllr Joanne Harding, Trafford.

- 2.4 Most men and boys are aware of appropriate behaviour towards women and girls. However, some are influenced by their peers, mentors and influencers and a few choose to behave inappropriately. Firstly, these individuals have a choice to not make women feel intimidated, threatened or abused in any way. However, the people around them also have a responsibility to promote respect, social values and how to be a good citizen. Older generations need to recognise the behaviours that are no longer (and never were) acceptable and peers need to call-out their friends when required.
- 2.5 Girls need to feel empowered to speak out when something does not feel right, friends, teachers and neighbours need to create spaces to allow them to do so. The issue remains that there is a lack of shared understanding about what type of behaviour constitutes violence against women and girls (VAWG),

therefore it's likely that underreporting could be as a consequence of women not being educated that any type of behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable should be termed VAWG.

- 2.6 The influence of online misogyny needs to be addressed and we as a collective group of individuals need to do whatever we can to create a safe, cohesive and respectful society. This unified action has the potential to create systemic change by looking at each potential perpetrator through a preventative lens, however in line with this we also need to support individuals to break cycles of discrimination, abuse and power seeking.

"I think that until we look at the cultural and systemic issues around the way we disrespect each other and the aggressor/victim ingrained behaviors, whatever we do will just be a sticking plaster." Councillor Jill Axford, Trafford

- 2.7 In our current generation, conflict over informal conversations can often be the preferred method of addressing situations and mixed with unpredictability and the need to record incidents, violence seems the only option. Although this review is focussed on the safety of women and girls it is evident that this type of behaviour can also result in the assault of men, further recognising that there is a role for all members of society to develop skills in conflict resolution and how to de-escalate situations but remain empowered, particularly for our young people.

- 2.8 If individuals have witnessed inappropriate behaviour, then they must also be encouraged to report it. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2021) found that only 14% of people who have been sexually harassed on a transport networks had reported the incident⁸.

- 2.9 Previous campaign messaging regarding the types of intimidation abuse that is less referred to have been weak in their messaging due to the risk of sensitivities - Intrusive staring *can be* sexual harassment. However, a

⁸ <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=64cde49b-a07c-4e92-8b15-59d164310bef>

potential minutia of challenge should not prevent campaigns from addressing the real issues.

“I’ve been on the bus, and it’s been really empty, and a man chose to sit next to me. Like why would they choose to sit next to me rather than on all the other empty seats? It felt like a sort of intimidation tactic.” Woman Passenger, TfGM, User Insights Survey, 2024

- 2.10 However, The number of incidents of crime & ASB reported has increased across bus and Metrolink however this corresponds to a significant uplift in frontline staff across both modes. The rate of incidents per million passenger journeys is currently holding at 46 (and has done for the last 6 months) this equates to 1 incident per 21,700 journeys.
- 2.11 The correct route to report issues can be confusing as there are many reporting pathways from 999 to the British Transport Police.
- 2.12 Help points are also provided across the network, which overrides CCTV cameras to focus on the emergency call. However, some passengers are not aware of the availability of these points. In some areas of Pakistan, help points are available on solar powered lampposts throughout a district. On pressing the help point, all nearby CCTV cameras are turned to cover the specific location.
- 2.13 Active bystander training may be a real place to start as its low cost, quick to spread and has been evidenced to make a significant difference to those who have engaged. Often people reported that they simply did not know what to do when faced with a situation they felt was wrong, this training could inform and empower attendees in a way that has the potential to spark real cultural change. The training explains how using the 5 D’s model can empower somebody to intervene – Distract (engage with the victim and/or the perpetrator by asking a question or moving into their space), Delegate (engage with another person in the area to highlight the issue or report the incident), Document (make a note of what was witnessed), Direct (highlight

what you have witnessed to the perpetrator), Delay (check in with the victim). However, it should not be seen as the only intervention as evaluation techniques are developing to understand to what extent it empowers active bystanders.

I was walking at a brisk pace to the bus stop, at 19:20 on a Tuesday, when a man came up to me from behind, touched my arm and asked, "Where are you from?" I whipped my head around to look at him and asked why he was asking. "I think you are sexy" – I was wearing a zipped up long black coat that went down to my calves, sneakers and my hair was tied up. I never stopped walking and kept looking straight ahead at the 2 women walking a few meters in front of me, hoping to get to the bus stop and away from this man. "Have you got any plans?" I said my sister was expecting me. He tried to grab my arm, but I pulled away and walked even faster while the women slowed down and he let me go.

The women turned to look at me and asked if I was ok. I thanked them, they said they heard something, and it caught their attention, and I explained. We kept talking and walking together to the bus stop. I was very grateful for their support and that they paid attention. It made me feel much better and safer right away. Maria (one of over 30,000 personal stories shared on the Right to Be Website), February 2022⁹

2.14 The University of Manchester's "Be the Change" campaign¹⁰, which focuses on active bystander training to address harassment, hate crime, and sexual violence, has begun to be evaluated. The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of the training modules and their impact on participants' behavior and attitudes. The initial findings indicated that the campaign has been successful in increasing awareness and confidence among participants to intervene in problematic situations. It also showed a reduction in the acceptance of discriminatory behaviours and an improvement in the overall university campus climate.

2.15 Campaign messaging is not always successful as a singular tool, research

⁹ <https://hateandhope.righttobe.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk/campaigns/active-bystander-training>

¹¹has shown that 1 in 10 people see campaign messaging and therefore should be considered as part of a wider community engagement model. Network Rail recently conducted a passenger survey which used QR codes to invite participants to respond to a few questions online. As a result, helpful qualitative data could be gathered regarding what helped women to feel safe and what made women feel unsafe. This type of engagement also further strengthens reassurance messaging as officers can share the reality of using public transport, rather than passengers (and potential passengers) relying on social media or news feeds to build their own perceptions. This engagement approach further creates an opportunity for 'did you know' type messaging, which can strengthen a sense of reassurance through increased awareness.

- 2.16 The TravelSafe Partnership provide an extensive educational outreach programme with a reach of around 50,000 young people each academic year. This includes targeted interventions to all primary Year 6 through Crucial Crew, and a reactive approach to Secondary schools where a virtual reality programme is provided in response to specific incidents or concerns.
- 2.17 This education programme is further supported by further investment into primary prevention through the GBV (Gender Based Violence) Strategy, offering a two-year co-designed programme with primary and secondary school aged boys.
- 2.18 Technology advances has brought more innovation to the education offer, such as a 'you choose' video being offered in Birmingham where students can select the decisions that a woman takes.
- 2.19 In Leigh, a wider approach has been taken to educating children on personal safety, with a Mini Police initiative bringing together a range of partner organisations to provide a programme of sessions looking at water safety, fire safety and how to stop a bleed. There was a particular focus on children taking responsibility for their behaviour on a wider range of scenarios.

¹¹ Network Principles Survey (2024) Transport for Greater Manchester

- 2.20 If the ambition in Greater Manchester is to curate the next generation of frequent public transport users, then they must also be educated on appropriate behaviour, whether this is in formal or informal educational settings. Every opportunity should be sought out as an opportunity to re-iterate the importance of safe and respectful travel for all.

Recommendations...

- 1. Clearly define for everyone what constitutes inappropriate and unwanted behaviour so there is no ambiguity – any behaviour which makes a woman feel uncomfortable.**
- 2. Develop conflict resolution skills through opportunities to teach young people about how to have respectful difficult conversations rather than choosing violence through the provision of adapted training programmes.**
- 3. Ensure that active bystander training is accessible for all who want to access it, recognising the ripple effect in cultivating a more supportive bystander culture.**

3. Social environment

- 3.1 The social environment should not be an accepted enabler for inappropriate behaviour. Perpetrators should not be able to use the excuse of excessive alcohol or a loss for their sports team for their inability to control their impulses. These behaviours must be owned by the individual, but those within the same social environment also have a role to play in calling out unwanted behaviour and not encouraging it as anything but inappropriate. Men should be able to hold their friends to account, but to do so they need to be informed and feel empowered.
- 3.2 However, there is also a moral obligation for those venues which create social environments to actively promote acceptable behaviour, relevant campaign messaging and to report any incidents. They should also look for ways in which women and girls can feel safer in their environments.
- 3.3 The #isthisok campaign¹² had seen a significant impact when it began in December 2021, featuring hard hitting messages about inappropriate behaviour towards women and girls. The importance of its messaging needs a continued communications plan, utilising all outlets to target key members of society, such as football stadiums, gyms, doctors' surgeries and public houses in order to saturate the messaging to a wider audience.
- 3.4 Communities and neighbourhoods create influential social environments that should be maximised to deliver messaging on the importance of this agenda. We know that no woman or girl is immune and that violence occurs across all communities, cultures and social classes.
- 3.5 An intentional partnership with the right expertise was created to support Right to the Streets in North Trafford to ensure that local knowledge and demographics could guide the programme. This work came about when some

¹² [#IsThisOK? - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)

local women expressed that they did not feel safe in certain areas, especially on match days when large groups of men plus alcohol resulted in an intimidating environment. The success of the interventions could be attributed to the neighbourhood model that gave space to address the issues that women in that area were facing rather than just a pan GM approach. Quick and low-cost changes created a strong sense of place and ownership and moved the focus to spaces that made people feel safe not just highlighting the things that further exasperated fear.

- 3.6 In 2022, the Home Office provided funding for a number of safer streets initiatives in Greater Manchester, one of which was focussed on Oldham Metrolink. The programme included promotion of GMP's live chat facility, the provision of Street Angels and youth workers on the network, investment of 51 CCTV cameras around five key hotspot areas, training for staff to stop and respond to incidents and the roll out of a campaign to challenge behaviour. As a result, there was a 19% decrease in overall incidents on and around the Oldham Metrolink, with an average 25% month on month reduction in female victim offences. There was also a 600% increase in incident reporting on that specific Metrolink line.
- 3.7 In total, Greater Manchester have utilised over £4 million of Safer Streets funding since 2020, unfortunately the Government have announced it will not continue into the next financial year, clarity regarding any future funding is essential. Access to this type of funding allows the roll out and trial of novel solutions which would not be possible without enabling funding that is not solely focussed on policing and enforcement. CCTV integration projects, as detailed above, have provided the evidence for wider roll out/integration. Drone technology has been trialled to look at remote location monitoring and the end-to-end user journey points raised by women and girls; street guardianship schemes have been created and integrated with other frontline resources providing a wrap-around of support.
- 3.8 Addressing the issue of safer streets will have significant repercussions in other social environmental areas such as an increased level of community

cohesion and citizenship.

- 3.9 Technology provides support to our social environment, whether it be through messaging, apps that track our location or support services that make women and girls feel safer, but it cannot work in isolation. The presence of people / staff should always be the priority, however, discreet ways to report feeling unsafe or witnessing unwanted or violent behaviour is the key. In Egypt, women can use the 'Harassmap' to share their experiences, report incidents and create maps where incidents have occurred. Websites such as 'Hollaback' allow women to report where they were harassed in major cities to allow public sector organisations to see areas where women may be at more risk¹³.
- 3.10 Currently British Transport Police have a text service for direct reporting incidents on trains. The Bee Network app (Transport for Greater Manchester) provides a direct link to chat with Greater Manchester Police should a passenger feel threatened or scared on Metrolink or the bus network. However, with only 1 in 3 people aware of the GMP live chat facility, it is not as prominent as it could be, and should appear on a banner across each tab on the app. Anyone using this service should be able to send one message and have an immediate response, i.e. CCTV cameras turned to their location without having to give multiple information.

"I've had mixed experiences of using the live chat to police to get action to tackle anti-social behavior on the tram. The first time I did it, late in the evening when another woman was being hassled and abused, it was fantastic – I subsequently overheard the driver taking a call, and she came out of the cab and warned the badly behaved group of young men and the police were waiting at the next tram stop. Since then, though, I've had poor experiences of the live chat facility taking too long to get through and explain that the moment had passed." Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin, Manchester.

¹³ Hollaback. (n.d.). About us. Retrieved from [ldn.ihollaback.org: https://ldn.ihollaback.org/about/](https://ldn.ihollaback.org/about/)

- 3.11 Unfortunately, the current market for apps that a women can use for a supportive presence if walking alone is complicated and unclear. There are too many unregulated options that result in women not using them. For example, Manchester City Council have commissioned Walk Safe Manchester as an app for women to download and use if they feel unsafe. It was selected due to its ability to provide a range of information, including details of 'safe spaces' who have signed up to the Nighttime Safety Charter and the location of volunteers such as the Village Angels. It provides suggested safe walking route which avoid isolated areas and keeps to main roads etc across the whole of Greater Manchester and not specific to the city centre. It also allows the user to pinpoint areas where they feel unsafe through its reporting feature and share their location with family and friends. To date there have been 6000 downloads, but this does not indicate the number of regular users. Wigan Council have commissioned a very similar app UMay which provides details on safe spaces, features a SOS button and allows contacts to track a user's whereabouts. However, to date there are only 778 users of this specific app.
- 3.12 Those with lived experience of abuse have stated that whilst they understand that such apps may be helpful for women walking alone, there are also some associated risks with technology enabled abuse. For example, if the app enables perpetrators to track the location of their victim.
- 3.13 The Bee Network app should look to provide a mechanism for technological support when walking home, rather than women being required to download and (forget to) use another app. Having all off these features on a transport-based app increases the discreetness for women when reporting an incident or seeking support in a vulnerable situation.

Recommendations...

- 4. Amplify the messaging of the #isthisok campaign with a particular focus on the places where men are regularly present, i.e. places of work and places of leisure.**

- 5. Increase the visibility of GMP's TravelSafe LiveChat service on each tab on the Bee Network app so that it is clearer how to report incidents and ensure that the minimal amount of questions are asked of the victim/witness.**
- 6. Introduce additional features to the Bee Network app that provides advice, support and information on safe spaces for women who feel vulnerable when walking alone so that it is co-located with travel information and a reporting feature.**
- 7. Secure and clarify long term and consistent funding that enables the required step change to see the safety of women and girls engrained throughout the design of spaces.**

4. Organisations and institutions

- 4.1 If organisations think differently about the safety of women and girls there is the potential to make a considerable impact to the cost of public services, maybe not directly, but indirectly. Using gender-disaggregated data for designing streets and public spaces in Sweden showed how the approach to clearing arterial roads of snow as a first priority adversely impacted women. It revealed that women and children predominately used pavements and cycleways and by clearing them first accidents decreased by half and resulted in a significant saving to the health service, and overall public purse.
- 4.2 In 2024 there were 450 sexual offences and 183 rapes in our city centre alone. This figure is startling but re-affirms the need for organisations to act.
- 4.3 Thankfully, there is already a significant amount of work happening across Greater Manchester to increase the feeling of safety for women and girls. In Manchester City Centre, businesses are encouraged to sign up to the 'Women's Nighttime Safety Charter' which provides them with monthly champion training, e-learning modules and active bystander training for their whole company. Being a member of the Charter also signifies to women and girls that the venue is a safe space should they require assistance on a night out.
- 4.4 Wigan are about to launch their first 'Safe Haven' which will provide a safe space for vulnerable people on a night out with low level medical care, toilets and access to safe journeys home.
- 4.5 Presence of trusted people in the town centres is an important reassurance for women and girls, in Manchester the Village Angels and Student Angels are volunteers who patrol the area to support vulnerable people. Similarly, Wigan have a number of Safety Marshalls in their town centre who can provide support, advice and chargers to charge people's phones. Their high-vis presence further supports the police and CCTV operators to address any incidents promptly.

- 4.6 A fully integrated public transport network requires a fully integrated CCTV system that shares data between the police, transport operators and local authorities. This model is used in Oldham and Manchester but needs to be Greater Manchester wide. Although complicated to implement at Stockport Interchange, it is now one of the strongest safety features and should be applied across all Bee Network interchanges firstly, and then across all public sector CCTV infrastructure as soon as possible.
- 4.7 In response to their own survey which highlighted that those under 24 years old felt the most unsafe, Manchester City Council along with its partner organisations have developed a 'good night guide' aimed specifically at its significant student population. In addition to safety advice regarding staying with your group of friends, this campaign material also highlights inappropriate behaviours and encourages young people to call out their peers who are exhibiting any of these behaviours.
- 4.8 The GM TravelSafe Partnership has been in existence for almost 20 years, its tactical group meets regularly to analyse data, reflect on recent incidents, plan for future initiatives and reports to the Bee Network Committee and the Police, Fire & Crime Committee. The Partnership has evolved during this time and all transport operators in Greater Manchester are active members of the Partnership and take part in weekly special operations, shared communications and site visits with local authorities and partner organisations to address specific issues.
- 4.9 The Safer Transport Review¹⁴ was approved at the GMCA meeting in May 2025 to support the three phased approach to implementing an integrated 11th District to police the transport network. It recognised that safety is one of the key commitments at the heart of the Bee Network, and while significant improvements have been made in recent years, crime and anti-social behaviour on the transport network remains a barrier to growth, with many

¹⁴ <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s37785/10%20GMCA%20Report%20-%20Safer%20Transport%20Review%2022.05.2025.pdf>

prospective passengers, especially women and girls, feeling unsafe when travelling, particularly late at night. Whilst strides in perceptions of safety have been made, this demonstrates there remains more to do.

- 4.10 In November 2024, it was agreed in consultation with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, that Transport for Greater Manchester and Greater Manchester Police would undertake a strategic review in collaboration with transport teams from across the TravelSafe Partnership, of the current enforcement and policing arrangements on the transport network, with the vision to make it into the safest in the world.
- 4.11 This review built on the existing TravelSafe Partnership alongside the successful application of Operation Vulcan problem-solving methodology (the operational name for the multi-agency targeted approach to tackling serious and organised crime in Cheetham Hill) at Piccadilly train station as part of Vulcan (Network).
- 4.12 While recognising the achievements to-date of the TravelSafe Partnership, the review recommended a step change in migrating from a partnership model to one of full integration, working towards ever safer transport in Greater Manchester.
- 4.13 This will see the establishment of a joint, integrated and co-located command team, with its own leadership, governance and performance framework, akin to an “11th District”, treating the transport network as its own district for policing and enforcement, alongside the 10 that currently make up Greater Manchester and a dedicated TravelSafe LiveChat facility.
- 4.14 Insight data from the 2024 Feelings of Safety qualitative research (TfGM) has shown that the greatest action that would improve the feeling of safety is a stronger staff presence on the network. In response to this, over 150 additional frontline staff have been appointed in the last year to bring visible authority to the Bee Network. However, staff must feel empowered and knowledgeable enough to intervene. As drivers and frontline staff are being

trained on the standards of the Bee Network, this opportunity should be harnessed to train them on identifying and addressing incidents of violence towards women and girls and define inappropriate behaviour. This training needs to provide a clear stance on the types of behaviour that can sometimes be deemed as 'low level' but actually cause women to feel vulnerable, intimidated and concerned for their safety through a zero-tolerance approach. The Rail Delivery Group have pledged to Government that they will ensure their staff are training on safeguarding and through their strategic alliance with Network Rail and rail operators this is filtering across the sector¹⁵.

- 4.15 The need for presence is often greater in remote areas where footfall is generally lower and therefore women are less likely to use these routes or stations. In recognition of this, eight specific officers have been included within the current night bus pilot.
- 4.16 Asking staff to intervene in situations where a woman or girl appears threatened is necessary, however as the Gender Based Violence Strategy Delivery Plan refers that they must be properly trained, empowered by their organisation and supported by legislation that will allow for prosecution if they are assaulted. The lack of sanctions for criminal behaviour on the network further amplifies the lack of safety provided to staff who intervene and also for passengers who report crimes. Perceptions can often be created due to lack of information; therefore, organisations need to ensure that members of the public are accurately informed about the initiatives that are in place to increase their safety and the consequences for perpetrators on the network. In relation to anti-social behaviour on the network 415 people had their tickets removed by Transport for Greater Manchester and 79 people were excluded from the network during 2024. This is the type of messaging that needs to be shared.
- 4.17 Quantitative data from passenger numbers, passengers surveyed etc may not always be reflective of the true experience for women and girls who would like to travel in that area. Previous schemes have highlighted that its only through

¹⁵ <https://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/our-work/where-we-work-uk/safeguarding-on-rail/>

talking directly with local residents and communities the real issues become clear, the Safer Streets programme in Oldham was an example of this, where data alone did not show the hotspots on the Metrolink line where women and girls had experienced feeling unsafe as they were no longer travelling on that line, avoiding certain areas and not always reporting their experiences.

- 4.18 Having been made aware of hotspots, TfGM have commissioned Foundation 92 to provide youth outreach six nights per week to divert them to positive activities. The response to this type of approach has been found to be more successful than enforcement.
- 4.19 Stagecoach have recently trialled a scheme in the East Midlands which they hope to roll out across their fleet in GM, it is similar to the “ask for angela” scheme in pubs and clubs which provides a safe word for women who need to notify the attention of staff that they are in an uncomfortable situation. From the trial, Stagecoach have recognised the strength in being the owners of the “ask for angel street” initiative as they are in control of the dissemination of the campaign materials and training offer. As it is a local initiative, there is also a greater responsibility to ensure its success. As part of the five courses required for bus drivers to attain their professional competencies, there is a passengersafety element which includes reference to this scheme and drivers are given a clear process to follow should someone ask for “Angel Street”. This includes allowing free travel, a discreet delay in continuing the journey, a call to the depot and a call to the police.
- 4.20 This initiative could also support women who are fleeing domestic violence situations, as boarding a bus and asking for a location is a discreet way of asking for help. For example, after asking for Angel Street, a passenger could be given a fake bus ticket that details where to seek support. However, drivers would also need to be briefed on its potential use in such scenarios so that they are trained how to respond.
- 4.21 As incident reports are held by individual organisations, the whole sense of the issue could potentially still be masked by this siloed collection. A shared

national dataset is crucial for resource allocation and business planning to ensure that the priority given to investment in relation to increasing the safety of women and girls is as significant as the issue itself. This has been evident in relation to the investment to tackle fare evasion, as data had showed it to be a growing issue in Greater Manchester, so the same should be done to invest in safety, which will not only prevent the number of incidents, but see an increase in patronage and revenue in response to this investment.

- 4.22 A purple flag accreditation¹⁶ highlights a place's ambition to not only create and maintain its identity but to ensure that people in that place can move around safely. It signifies excellence in the nighttime economy and that your safety on a night out is a priority for the Local Authority and its partners.
- 4.23 The purple flag banner creates an umbrella by which shared ambition across partner organisations can be driven forward. However, there is a clear need for a driving force behind this agenda, both politically and across the Greater Manchester Strategy¹⁷ partners. Too often the equalities agenda is siloed, but the safety of women and girls needs to be entwined in each area of the socio-economic model to enable system change.
- 4.24 The GMCA launched its Gender Based Violence (GBV) Strategy in September 2021, recognising a system-wide long-term strategy was needed to effect change. This strategy is a 10-year plan with a number of key priorities determined by lived experience to tackle the issue. However, the GMCA in isolation cannot affect the scale of change needed, this must be delivered with partner organisation across the city region.
- 4.25 This review is designed to help support the work, which is already ongoing, but it is important to recognise that it only discusses one element of the GBV Strategy. It is envisaged that this review provides a catalyst of energy across all of the priorities so that the objectives of the GBV Strategy can be taken forward by all partners.

¹⁶ <https://www.atcm.org/purple-flag>

¹⁷ <https://aboutgreatermanchester.com/>

- 4.26 Even the best and most well thought out strategy must have a lead. Both the GM Mayor and Deputy Mayor have taken a visible stance on this agenda, but it is important to have a network of key stakeholders and decision-makers committed and empowered to enact the changes required.

Recommendations...

- 8. Ensure political and organisational leadership so that the safety of women and girls becomes inherent across all GM portfolio areas and across each area of the socio-economic model to enable real system change.**
- 9. Listen to insight gathered and not just what the data appears to be showing, to ensure issues are investigated as appropriate.**
- 10. Increase the presence of staff throughout the network, especially in the evening or around large-scale events.**
- 11. Empower those staff to intervene in situations through the right training and legislation that supports them to undertake their role.**
- 12. Invest in a fully integrated CCTV system across the public transport network, local authorities and partner organisations to ensure that the network is truly integrated.**
- 13. Introduce “ask for angel street” style scheme across the whole Bee Network, alongside a high-level campaign to support its implementation.**
- 14. Develop and enable a shared dataset to help organisations accurately assess safety concerns across demographics, enabling targeted solutions.**
- 15. Pursue aspirations for purple flag accreditation for all GM towns to publicly evidence our ambition for a safer nighttime economy.**

5. Physical environment

*People make a place safe.*¹⁸

- 5.1. For women, a lack of safety infrastructure and presence of staff or fellow passengers often exasperates feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Ultimately, we need more people on the public transport network. Therefore, to create a greater sense of trust in alternative modes of transport to the car, it is essential to create physical and psychological safety through physical infrastructure.
- 5.2. Designing spaces that work for women will make them safer, healthier and more pleasant for everyone. To achieve this, all stakeholders, planners, government authorities, community groups and urban professionals must come together for an inclusive and integrated approach at all stages.
- 5.3. As women and girls rely more on public transport and active travel modes and are often more vulnerable to violence in public spaces, their perceptions of safety are a significant influencing factor that often restrict their access to key opportunities, this must change so that transport networks and public spaces are safer for all¹⁹.

“When my daughters feel unsafe, they ring me to collect them from wherever they are – some young girls don’t have that option” Councillor Terry Smith, Rochdale

- 5.4. However, a single incident, or reports of a single incident is all that is needed for a lasting impact on a woman’s sense of safety and travel choices. 54% of those who had experienced sexual harassment said it has affected their quality of life²⁰. One negative incident is enough to fundamentally alter a

¹⁸ https://www.tii.ie/media/m0nj2o5o/tii-travelling-in-a-womans-shoes-report_issue.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/thecommutinggapmenaccountfor65ofcommuteslastingmorethananhour/2018-11-07>

²⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002873/2021-07-12_Sexual_Harassment_Report_FINAL.pdf

woman's relationship with public transport.

"After being approached at a bus stop, I used to have my headset on, but now I don't anymore. I want to stay vigilant. I have my phone in my pocket, and I always make sure to have my keys in my hand. If I see anyone behind me, they are probably not doing anything, but I walk faster to get home!" Woman Passenger, TfGM User Insights Survey, 2024

- 5.5. The design of public spaces frequently add to or compound gender inequalities. Simply the way cities are built often makes women feel unsafe, does not provide for their basic needs and restricts their social and economic opportunities. As a result, billions of women are underserved by the environments they live and work in.
- 5.6. The establishment of the Bee Network creates a significant opportunity to promote good behaviour, through many elements of the physical environment. Regular announcements, targeted information and live communication from drivers can all help to humanise the network and moves away from a lecturing approach that tends to be ignored. Messaging about safety should not default to a few campaigns per year, but should be a continuous thread through all messaging, electronic screens, billboards, stops and interchanges.
- 5.7. Stockport Interchange was one of the latest significant infrastructure investments made by Transport for Greater Manchester, costing £140 million. It began as a request to design and instal a replacement bus depot, but after years of development with partners, it became so much more. The space now provides housing, green space, social space and cultural space. As a destination for more than transport, ensuring safety was a key component within its concept. The interchange itself was created to have clear lines of sight not only for staff and security but also for passengers. Its high ceilings and glass panelled walls create a sense of space and remove any isolated corners. Lighting plays a significant role in making the space feel pleasant and well lit. The safety features that have been implemented are well thought out and make the space feel welcoming, open and safe, however it would have

been even better to see that the early design concepts had been deliberately considered from the perspective of women and girls.

- 5.8. Designing a new physical environment is uncommon since transport infrastructure is usually established, integrated with other systems, or limited by budget. Instead, modifying existing buildings can often enhance safety, drawing on insights from projects like Stockport Interchange—such as improving lines of sight, open spaces, and people flow. To address safety concerns for women and girls, all public transport infrastructure, starting with interchanges should be audited to identify immediate actions needed.
- 5.9. Street harassment and harassment on and around public transport was the most frequently mentioned issue raised by women and girls as part of the Gender Based Violence ‘call for evidence’ and as a result the Gender Based Violence Delivery Plan now contains a dedicated work stream around safer travel led by TfGM. Sexual Harassment in a public place is a criminal offence. In 2023 a sex-based harassment in public act 2023 was introduced to the Public Order act 1986, under section 4a. The law has defined public sexual harassment as causing another person harassment, alarm or distress based on their sex and can carry a maximum sentence of up to 2 years.
- 5.10. Considering the journey through the eyes of women and girls is again vital when considering decisions regarding the physical environment. Insight data ²¹ highlighted that even going to the same bus stop at the same time everyday made some women feel unsafe in case their patterns were being observed. This would be especially significant for criminal behaviour such as stalking or harassment and could increase a woman’s risk of being located by a domestic abuser.

“A lot of cars will kind of just slow down when there is a woman alone at the bus stop, almost stop and then drive on. I’ve seen the same car drive around a couple of times.”
Woman Passenger, TfGM User Insights Survey, 2024

²¹ Feelings of Safety qualitative research (2024) TfGM

5.11. Transport for London provide real-time data across their whole network. This is not only beneficial in terms of assessing punctuality and improving customer experience, but it also provides necessary information for women and girls to make informed decisions that increase their feeling of safety, for example only arriving at the stop a couple of minutes before the arrival of the vehicle. Reliability of services is also a key contributing factor as to whether women and girls will choose the public transport network, as their sense of safety can be impacted by being made to wait in a vulnerable place for a service that had been advertised as arriving at a certain time. Unreliable services can leave women waiting for extended periods in poorly lit and isolated places. Data gathered by Transport Focus (2022) showed that 85% of women and girls surveyed think about their personal safety when planning and making a journey and 66% plan journeys around times they think are safer to travel²². The last bus or train is often seen as an unreliable service due to increased levels of cancellation and at present there is no duty of care on the transport operator to ensure the safety of their passengers in that situation. This could lead to women and girls being left vulnerable, especially in isolated areas of the network where there are limited alternative options.

“Reliability is critical when feeling safe and too often things don’t turn up. On the last two occasions I have tried to use a bus out of Manchester it hasn’t arrived. Hanging around for the next one isn’t safe so again, I just get a taxi.” Councillor Liz Fitzgerald, Bury.

5.12. In Umea, Sweden the Lev! (Live) is an 80m long bicycle passage that demonstrates planning through a safety lens. Its entrances are wide and welcoming, gradual gradients, rounded corners and natural lighting enhance sight lines and calming artwork and soundspaces help users feel at ease. High footfall also generates natural surveillance which has made women feel more secure. The perception of safety resulting from its design has made the tunnel one of the city’s main attractions²³.

²² <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/experiences-of-women-and-girls-on-transport/>

²³ <https://www.arup.com/insights/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women/>

- 5.13. Often the feeling of safety is based on perceptions rather than actual incidents, which illustrates that changes in the physical environment may be able to influence perceptions. Lighting can be significant in creating an ambience that is welcoming and removing any anxiety in relation to dark spaces. In 2019 ARUP partnered with XYX Lab in Australia to consult with women regarding the current street and transport lighting. Their research discovered that the current lighting practices did not make women feel safe as the effect of intense spotlighting made women feel that they were on display and unable to see someone in the dark. The project found that diffused LED lighting was more effective in creating a feeling of safety amongst women²⁴.
- 5.14. In North Trafford, women commented that the physical environment of some walking routes were not creating a space that felt safe. The Right to the Streets Programme began with walkabouts, place reviews and public tagging where together 167 people developed a map of safe routes around their community. This was supported by a variety of community arts and participation projects which saw over 1000 people engaged on the agenda. This engagement model further led to a community led campaign and podcast series and their decision to offer active bystander training to local representatives recognising the ripple effect to their networks.
- 5.15. Different bus stop designs influence how women feel whilst waiting. TfGM's Network Principles Survey (2024) highlighted that bus stops with solid casing (not transparent) had been described as feeling less safe as women could not see who was behind them. In relation to the printed timetables within the bus shelters, one woman reported that she felt unsafe turning her back to other passengers to check the text close up, whilst another woman said that taking her phone out of her bag to check the timetable made her feel more vulnerable.

"I never go into Manchester to the Bridgewater Hall for concerts if they are in the evening. I would really like to, but I feel unsafe in the Piccadilly Gardens area where

²⁴ Arup. (n.d.). Making Cities Safer for Girls and Women. Retrieved from research.arup.io: <https://research.arup.io/story/cities-for-girls>

my bus stop is. There are always 'characters' hanging around and this makes me feel vulnerable. I don't drive either so it really has an impact on where I can go. At peak times this bus stop has a crowd of people who all just push their way on to the bus. It is very difficult for me to get on the bus because of this and to get a seat. I avoid this as much as possible." Councillor Debra Wailes, Wigan

5.16. As the Bee Network moves to its next phase and looks to integrate 8 of the key commuter rail lines within its model, accurate real time information is a must in order to ensure that the vulnerability of women and girls is not increased by their time waiting for a train that is showing as arriving and then cancelled at the last minute. Applying the Bee Network standards to these stations should mean a visible staff presence, a welcoming and pleasant environment and real-time information. Rural and isolated areas should also be prioritised. According to data provided by the British Transport Police, sexual offences on the railway rose nationally by 10% between 2021-2023. In a recent survey conducted by Transport Scotland²⁵ of women commuters, a third of respondent felt that they were concerned with their safest on a train, potentially due to repeat travel patterns, small spaces and overcrowding at peak times, reflecting that this mode of transport cannot be ignored. If this technology is already available for services such as Uber, it is vital that it is embraced across the whole of the Bee Network, not forgetting the potential increased travel by rail during this next phase.

"Through our lived experiences of being on a train or bus and be subject to unwanted attention, is extremely frightening when you are a lone female." Councillor Mary Callaghan, Wigan.

5.17. Feeling safe whilst moving across the city region goes beyond the public transport network into the public realm spaces that we design for women and girls to use but are they ever consulted at the early stage of a design concept? It is not enough to say that there are women represented on a project board, instead they must be a key consultee within the approval process. Future

²⁵ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/women-and-girls-safety-on-public-transport/>

design should be intentionally gender informed so that the safety of women and girls is more significant in design and planning than in previous approaches. Planning guidelines should also insist that there is evidence as to the positive/negative impact to women and girls presented alongside the planning application and any remedial action addressed before a planning condition is discharged.

- 5.18. In 2022 Arup, UNDP and the University of Liverpool partnered to bring attention to this inadequately addressed issue of gender inequity in the built environment; through the publication of *Cities Alive – Designing Cities that work for women*²⁶. Their publication suggests two methodologies for addressing gender inequity in cities. These are:
- Implementing gender-responsive project foundations, and
 - Utilising a gender-responsive project roadmap.
- 5.19. The twelve foundational principles detailed in their guidance are practical steps to creating the optimum environment in which to deliver gender equity. These include conducting a women's local needs analysis, developing a gender-responsive city action plan, adopting inclusive procurement mechanisms and importantly, ensuring diverse voices and experiences are heard when shaping projects. Local Authorities should start and begin with a diverse team that understands the intersectional challenges faced by women, produce a gender-responsive engagement plan which sets out how engagement with women will be carried out at all stages of the project, develop a multi-criteria assessment tool for options appraisal, and submit a 'gender-responsive design plan' with every planning submission. As a project moves to implementation, local authority's risk registers should include standing risks and mitigations around the experiences of women and the project should be monitored to see whether the anticipated outcomes are being achieved.
- 5.20. In 2014, a male bias was found by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women "in the planning, provision and design of transport systems"

²⁶ <https://www.arup.com/insights/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women/>

due to under-representation in the sector²⁷. Traditionally male dominated leadership and project management has contributed to an unintended bias in the design of transport systems, resulting in adverse outcomes for women. At present, cities prioritise men's mobility, safety, leisure and economic wellbeing over women's²⁸.

- 5.21. There is a need to address the limited representation of women amongst built environment professionals and space making decision makers. It is vital that more is done to encourage women into these fields and remove barriers to entry and progression. Alongside this, those already in positions of influence need to understand the importance of gender equity and how this should be considered at the start of a project.
- 5.22. Globally, women hold about 10% of senior architecture and urban planning positions. The representation of women in city leadership roles is even lower, at around 5%²⁹.
- 5.23. There is significant potential for future career opportunities for all girls in Greater Manchester through the MBacc scheme. However, the current offer needs to consider how engineering and planning qualifications can be embedded not only to widen the MBacc options, but to encourage a new generation of female place creators and builders who see the potential opportunities and risks of a scheme so differently than their male counterparts. In such roles which are traditionally seen as 'male' it's important to consider how the narrative should be changed in order to increase the attraction of such career pathways. If women and girls could see the difference that they could make to the spaces around them, as not only designers or engineers but as observers, creative thinkers and protectors then this may significantly increase the attraction of these career choices.

Recommendations...

²⁷ Badstuber, N. (2019, May 21). Mind the gender gap: the hidden data gap in transport. Retrieved from themandarin.com: <https://www.themandarin.com.au/108874-mind-the-gender-gap-the-hidden-data-gap-in-transport/>

²⁸ The World Bank (2020) Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design

²⁹ <https://www.shiftcities.org/post/mainstreaming-gender-urban-planning-and-design>

- 16. Develop and agree a design guide that incorporates the latest thinking on a gender informed approach and will apply to future development in public spaces across Greater Manchester.**
- 17. Conduct an audit of all public transport infrastructure, beginning with interchanges, to identify any changes that can be made to make women and girls feel safer.**
- 18. Provide accurate real time information on the Bee Network app, at stops and on vehicles to ensure that women and girls can make decisions that increase their feeling of safety.**
- 19. Ensure that safety messaging is a continuous thread through all communications across the Bee Network infrastructure, from on-board screens to Metrolink stops. Isolated campaigns are not enough.**
- 20. Prioritise reliability to reduce the hesitancy of women and girls to choose public transport as a safe option.**
- 21. Enhance MBacc opportunities for engineering, planning and architectural roles to enable a future generation of female place creators.**

6. Policy

- 6.1. It is imperative to pursue visibility so that the issue of safety of women and girls can be seen through each new policy in Greater Manchester, especially key documents such as the Local Transport Plan.
- 6.2. Greater Manchester Strategy (2021-31)³⁰ states *the transformation of places will require all parts of Greater Manchester to have good access to interconnected transport infrastructure, safe, accessible and affordable.*
- 6.3. Understanding the national picture of the potential value to be added to our economy by improving the feeling of safety would be a significant lever for further projects and future investment decisions.
- 6.4. In economic terms we can communicate the cost of an additional element to a design concept that improves the feeling of safety for women and girls, but we rarely consider the cost of not including the element. Often taking no action results in a far greater cost to the public purse, whether that be through girls not feeling safe to access a college course which is a bus ride away, or women not choosing to work in a particular town centre because of the route they'd have to walk to reach their place of work. The ripple effect is almost unmeasurable, as if women felt safer in spaces, they would stay a little longer, spend more money in the leisure and hospitality sector and further boost the economy through their spending. In capturing this economic potential, everybody wins. TfGM have estimated that there is approximately £113,000 per month lost revenue in Greater Manchester due to users not choosing public transport, that equates to £1.2 million per year. Up to 3.7% GDP can be lost through women's fears of accessing jobs via the use of public transport³¹. To echo these findings, Merseytravel documented the negative effects of sexual harassment to cost the UK economy circa £338m per annum

³⁰ <https://aboutgreatermanchester.com/media/jlslgbys/greater-manchester-strategy-our-plan.pdf>

³¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/620485/Infrastructure-Cities-briefing-note.pdf

through women and girls feeling unsafe³².

- 6.5. Every policy decision taken by Transport for Greater Manchester, the GMCA and GM Local Authorities should be considered from a gender perspective, i.e. how will this policy potentially positively or negatively impact women and girls. It was concerning that the current Local Transport Plan³³ only makes one reference to the safety of women and girls in the KPI associated with the feeling of safety when walking *N.B women's perception of personal security is significantly lower than men's*.
- 6.6. Looking beyond good practice in the UK, there are examples of places across the world such as Vienna where the consideration of policy through the lens of the safety of women and girls is just the norm. From the early 1990's, it was one of the first cities to trial 'participatory walks' where women accompanied planners around the city to highlight areas of insecurity and proposed solutions. Incorporating gender perspectives systematically into transport and infrastructure planning is entirely possible and it is imperative that policy makers continue to look to their examples and learn from best practice where possible.
- 6.7. If GM were able to demonstrate they are advancing in their thinking towards the safety of women and girls, visible on the streets and through policy, then it would also encourage further investment in the future from companies who want to be part of a city region who think that way.
- 6.8. Our policy influence needs to go way beyond the Bee Network with one particular area of focus being the taxi trade and making roads safer for all road users. Currently dangerously un-regulated, the risk of a girl getting into a taxi who is registered outside of GM, whose driver has not been vetted appropriately, is concerning. Often, they are considered as 'safer' than public transport, but there are many national stories of drivers not being responsible for the young women they pick up and leaving them in vulnerable places, and

³² Beilinson, H (2021) 'Safe Woman Economic Impact Assessment & Final Report', iSensing Limited.

³³ [Delivery Plan 2021-2026 Jan 2021 Final.pdf](#)

of greater concern incidents of violence or harm to passengers. The Licensing Department at Wigan Council provide mandatory training to all their taxi drivers including safeguarding and have also installed a QR sticker on each cab which allows direct access to reporting any concerns about that particular driver or journey.

- 6.9. Although the technology of Uber could increase feelings of safety as you can track your taxi, see your bookings etc the national licensing standards surrounding this type of vehicle were unclear. Further work was needed to align the expectations of taxi drivers and their role in sharing the message of the #isitok campaign to increase feeling of safety of women and girls. The potential of licensing training to empower the taxi driver population is significant and this opportunity should be used to continue the momentum of this campaign messaging.

Recommendations...

- 22. Calculate at a national level the economic loss from women and girls not accessing education, training and work due to the feeling of being unsafe, to demonstrate the need for investment.**
- 23. Ensure all taxi drivers are registered in Greater Manchester and appropriately vetted. There should be no opportunities for national licensing.**
- 24. Use licensing training should be as an outlet to promote the messaging of the #isitok campaign in order to inform taxi drivers of appropriate behaviour and how to take action if they witness inappropriate behaviour.**
- 25. Continue to seek best practice from across the world as to how to consider policy changes from the perspective of creating a safe environment for women and girls.**

7. Cultural norms and ideologies

- 7.1. Wider societal norms, misogynistic attitudes and values embedded in cultural viewpoints, together with underlying inequalities has fostered gender-based violence. Historically there has been an emphasis on women and girls being required to change or alter their behaviour to try and keep safe, but more needs to be done to address the reasons that they feel unsafe, including the impact of the inappropriate behaviour of men and boys.
- 7.2. North Cumbria's campaign #italladdsup emphasises how every negative interaction between a woman and a man can build up to a point where a woman changes herself, her behaviour and removes herself from situations. It asks all viewers to consider whether they are in fact part of the problem?³⁴
- 7.3. In considering the notion of 'positive masculinity' with a number of organisations who provide space for men and boys to discuss how they feel about navigating the world, there was a challenge to consider whether these conversations should actually be more about living good citizen values and beliefs rather than focussing on masculinity as this term was subjective depending on people's own lived experience.
- 7.4. However, it was clear that until men felt 'safe' themselves, whether this be in terms of their mental health, self-worth etc, then as has always been the case, there would be some men who are violent towards women.
- 7.5. TfGM's 'feelings of safety' qualitative research (2024) highlighted how past negative experiences changes women's future risk-based decision making. They took decisions that avoided the unsafe situation, created coping strategies, chose safer alternatives and stopped taking public transport altogether. This heightened alertness and continual risk assessment has been normalised by women often not even recognising the additional emotional load.

³⁴ <https://rctn.org.uk/campaigns/italladdsup/>

“From my experience, I realise that I probably tend to expect men to be hostile, rude, aggressive verbally and drunk, so I don’t really take stuff personally.” Councillor Jill Axford, Trafford

- 7.6. The effectiveness of previous programmes that have worked with women to change their behaviours has been minimal due to the fact that the root cause of male behaviours around control, domination, aggression have never seriously been addressed.
- 7.7. Sweeping statements about the attitudes of men have also been harmful in creating barriers to men being able to be vulnerable enough to see themselves as part of the solution to increased levels of women and girls feeling safe. For as long as we continue to see men and boys solely as the problem, we will fail to realise their potential to be an active part of the solution³⁵.
- 7.8. In their research, Unlimited Potential have listened to over 4000 voices of men and boys in Greater Manchester and identified some of the lens that men and boys see ‘masculinities’ which could also be used as drivers for behavioural change. Fathers talked about their role towards daughters as a protector from the outside world, mainly noted as other men. They did not feel obligated to protect their sons in the same way. Many of the men also felt a profound ‘duty’ to protect women in general (not just family and friends) but also often assumed that they were less capable of protecting themselves and therefore more vulnerable. Shifting this lens further towards power, many men and boys also expressed through the research that it was their duty to be in control and to be physically assertive.
- 7.9. If fatherhood is a motivator for shifting male behaviours, there is the potential for this message to be used as a lever in future campaign and project work to encourage boys and men to ‘show up’ better for women and girls, which in

³⁵ Our Lenses – a report on stage 1 of the positive masculinities project in Greater Manchester – Unlimited Potential
<https://www.unlimitedpotential.org.uk/sites/default/files/users/upadmin/Our%20Lenses%20-%20stage%201%2C%20Positive%20Masculinities%20%28SF%20UP%205.24%29%20final.pdf>

turn will result in better socialisation and behaviours amongst their wider networks.

- 7.10. Interestingly, there was a generational aggregation evident within the research, highlighting that more younger men felt that they wanted to move away from the social expectations of 'bring a man', one of which was defined as holding power over women, as this held them back and made them feel responsible to behave in a way misaligned from their personal values.
- 7.11. There are over 1 million men in Greater Manchester, a percentage of which who are clearly violent and abusive but a larger percentage who have an issue with navigating through the maze of cultural influences regarding being a man. With loneliness and isolation being one of the most significant issues raised, it's understandable why these men and boys are accessing social media for direction, many of which have clear but harmful messages regarding misogyny, radicalisation or violence.
- 7.12. Creating new cultural norms comes from aligned intentional formal and informal interventions, influenced by trusted connections. If a message is shared by multiple influencers, then a momentum is created that can take a cohort of 3% to a cohort of 80%.
- 7.13. Even by observing social media and some of the 'influencers' who are directing the behaviour of young men, it's clear that the language chosen when speaking to or about girls is not appropriate. Access to porn and other inappropriate material is too easy and there should be stronger restrictions on what under 18s can view in recognition that this material has a significant effect on their behaviours. Those young men who would strongly defend the women in their own families, they often show little respect for other girls and women.

"I am greatly concerned by the access that young boys have to misogynistic, violent and sexual online content that was previously not as accessible. What they are constantly viewing is negatively shaping this generation's view of masculinity."

- 7.14. Organisations with responsibilities go beyond public bodies and large profitable companies also have a duty of care to restrict inappropriate content, remove influencers who promote misogynistic views against women and ensure the safeguarding of not only their viewers but the potential victims of those who have been exposed to their content.
- 7.15. There needs to be a space created within the current curriculum in recognition of the differences between boys' and girls' feelings of a shared situation. With an 'outcomes' shift in secondary education there is little space for the development of soft skills, such as respect, unity and self-control. This is not a criticism of teaching staff, but of the current system focus which has lost sight of its role in creating good members of society through the presence of a nurturing environment as they grow.
- 7.16. Outside of the education system, young people are further influenced by the behaviours of others around them, hence the need for an overall change to cultural norms. Education needs to span generations, as in previous generations, it was perhaps not seen as offensive to cat-call a woman from a building site, but these behaviours need addressing before they are passed down to younger generations.
- 7.17. Greater Manchester's Live Well initiative looks to strengthen communities, so everyone can lead a healthier happier life, this model is ideal for creating the environment where men and boys can fulfil their potential and become active and positive members of society, therefore this focus should be included in its objectives.

Recommendations...

- 24 Create spaces through the Live Well initiative where men and boys can comfortably learn to be who they really are through the influence of strong role models.**

8. Summary of findings

- Women are being adversely impacted by being and feeling unsafe in public, in particular, when walking or using public transport.
- Ensuring safety is a major concern for many women, who often remain vigilant while traveling, especially at night.
- Understanding the economic impact of safety concerns can drive investment.
- Unsafe feelings among women can lead to significant economic losses due to their reluctance to access education, training, and employment.
- Although unsafe incidents are not a daily occurrence, their significant impact can profoundly affect women's sense of security and influence their travel choices.
- The initial and final segments of the journey to the transport network are frequently perceived as unsafe, leading to a preference for cars or taxis.
- The absence of active bystanders can contribute to feelings of isolation and insecurity.
- Establishing both physical and psychological safety is crucial for fostering women's trust in active and public transportation modes.
- venues creating social environments should promote acceptable behaviour and report incidents, while communities and neighbourhoods should leverage their influence to spread awareness
- Spaces are often inadvertently gender-biased towards men.
- More women involved in spatial design would have a profound effect. Career pathways should be made accessible to the next generation of girls.
- Cultural norms and underlying inequalities have historically fostered gender-based violence, emphasising the need for women and girls to alter their behaviour to stay safe. However, the root causes of male behaviours around control and aggression have not been thoroughly addressed.
- Cultural norms must change across all generations, and the Live Well initiative should include objectives to help men fulfil their potential and contribute positively to society.
- The need for clear definitions of inappropriate behaviour, active bystander training, and conflict resolution skills to empower individuals to intervene in

problematic situations

- Efforts to ensure women and girls' safety have been bolstered by campaigns like #isthisok, which promotes the importance of respectful behavior.
- Technological advancements, such as live chat services and safety apps, play a crucial role in offering discreet support and incident reporting.
- The strategic review and establishment of an integrated policing district for the transport network highlight the urgent need for a unified approach to safety.
- Enhancing policies beyond the Bee Network, especially in the taxi trade, is essential.
- Using gender-disaggregated data to design safer public spaces, increasing public awareness of safety initiatives, and investing in a shared national dataset to better allocate resources are also imperative.
- The implementation of schemes like "ask for angel street" and the push for purple flag accreditation further emphasise the commitment to ensuring the safety of women and girls yet underscore the necessity for continued political and organisational leadership to achieve systemic change.

9. Further reading

[Security of Public Transport Facilities: an effective approach - POLIS Network](#)

[How cities can make public transport inclusive, equitable and accessible for everyone](#)

[Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

[Driving Out Violence and Aggression on Public Transport | Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

[Secured by Design - Secured by Design](#)

[Cities Alive: Designing cities that work for women - Arup](#)

[Travelling in a Woman's Shoes - Arup](#)

[Violence against Women and Girls, Infrastructure and Cities: briefing note](#)

[Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport](#)

Campaigns –

[Home Office campaign - ENOUGH](#)

[Police Scotland campaign - That Guy](#)

National Rail campaign - Zero Tolerance

It All Adds Up Educational Resource – Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland

10. Access to Information

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11. Thanks and Acknowledgements

The Group would like to extend its thanks to those who directly helped support and shape this review:

- Kate Green, Deputy Mayor for Safer and Stronger Communities, GMCA
- Vernon Everitt, Greater Manchester Transport Commissioner, TfGM
- Hannah Wright, Member of the GM Gender Based Violence Lived Experience Panel
- Nelly Yatou, Member of the GM Gender Based Violence Lived Experience Panel
- Carol Judge Campbell - Victims & Vulnerability Principal, Safer and Stronger Communities, GMCA
- Kate Smith- Senior Policy/Partnership Officer, Safer and Stronger Communities, GMCA
- Dominic Coleman - Senior Policy/Partnership Officer, Safer and Stronger Communities, GMCA
- Kate Green - Travelsafe Partnership Manager, TfGM
- Lucy Kennon - Head of TravelSafe and Resilience, TfGM
- Michael Conroy – Director, Men at Work
- Chris Dabbs – Chief Executive, Unlimited Potential
- Jaiden Corfield – Project Manager, Unlimited Potential
- Eve Holt - Head of Policy and Implementation, GMCA
- Kate O'Connor - Crime Reduction Coordinator, GMP
- Kim Power - Principal Planner and Inclusive Cities Lead, ARUP
- Gary Jones, Regional Crime Manager, Network Rail
- Gary Banks, Operations Manager, Stagecoach
- Candi Turner, Policy Specialist with lead for VAWG, Manchester City Council
- Laura White, Strategic Lead City Centre Partnerships, Manchester City Council
- Bil Ahmed, Strategic Stakeholder & Engagement Lead, Manchester City Council

- Julie Middlehurst, Assistant Director-Infrastructure and Regulatory Services, Wigan Council
- Emma Stubbs, Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods, Stockport Council
- Jacqui Belfield-Smith, Strategic Lead: Youth Justice, Complex Safeguarding, Serious Violence Reduction & Targeted Youth Support, Stockport Council
- Jane Bardsley, Senior Neighbourhoods Officer, Stockport Council
- Helen Webster, Project Manager, TfGM
- Ben Woodhead, Technical Director, The Harris Partnership
- Ian Wrench, Detective Chief Inspector, GMP

12. Calendar of Meetings

- **25 September 2024:** Resolution to form a Task and Finish Group at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- **23 October 2024:** Topic for the Task and Finish Group approved by Committee
- **6 November 2024:** Scoping Meeting 1 (appointed Chair, Introduction to gender-based violence, agreed areas for review focus, confirmed membership, confirmed frequency of meetings)
- **4 December 2024:** Focus for this session: What does the data show us?

Expert Witnesses -

Kate Green, Travelsafe Partnership Manager, TfGM

Lucy Kennon, Head of TravelSafe and Resilience, TfGM

- **16 December 2024:** Focus for this session: current schemes across GM that aim to improve the safety of women and girls

Expert Witness –

Kate Green, Travelsafe Partnership Manager, TfGM

- **9 January 2025:** Focus for this session: behavioural change and positive masculinity

Expert Witnesses –

Chris Dabbs - Chief Executive, Unlimited Potential

Jaiden Corfield - Project Manager, Unlimited Potential

Michael Conroy – Director, Men at Work

- **20 January 2025:** Focus for this session: holistic approach to the safety of women and girls

Expert Witness –

Eve Holt, Head of Policy & External Engagement, GMCA

- **10 February 2024:** Focus for this session: Safety by Design

Expert Witnesses –

Kate O'Connor, Crime Reduction Co-ordinator, GMP

Kim Power, Principal Urban Planner, Planning, Policy & Economics, ARUP

- **26 February 2025:** Focus for this session: reflect on the areas from the review and start to formulate recommendations

- **27 March 2025:** Focus for this session: Staff training - ask for Angel Street, Stagecoach, Network Rail

Expert Witnesses - Gary Jones, Regional Crime Manager, Network Rail and Gary Banks, Operations Manager, Stagecoach

- **7 April 2025:** Focus for this session: Improving the feeling of safety in our

public realms

Expert Witnesses - Candi Turner, Policy Specialist with lead for VAWG, Laura White, Strategic Lead City Centre Partnerships and Bil Ahmed, Strategic Stakeholder & Engagement Lead, Manchester City Council

Julie Middlehurst, Assistant Director-Infrastructure and Regulatory Services, Wigan Council

- **14 April 2025:** Focus for this session: Site visit to Stockport Interchange

Expert Witnesses –

Emma Stubbs, Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods, Stockport Council

Jacqui Belfield-Smith, Strategic Lead: Youth Justice, Complex Safeguarding, Serious Violence Reduction & Targeted Youth Support, Stockport Council

Jane Bardsley, Senior Neighbourhoods Officer, Stockport Council

Helen Webster, Project Manager, TfGM

Ben Woodhead, Technical Director, The Harris Partnership

Ian Wrench, Detective Chief Inspector, GMP

- **30 April 2025:** Focus for this session: Draft Report to lived experience group

Expert Witnesses –

Hannah Wright, Member of the GM Gender Based Violence Lived Experience Panel

Nelly Yatou, Member of the GM Gender Based Violence Lived Experience Panel

- **13 May 2025:** Focus for this session: Conversation with Vernon Everitt, GM Transport Commissioner
- **21 May 2025:** Focus for this session: Conversations with Kate Green,

Deputy GM Mayor for Police & Crime

- **25 June 2025:** Draft report to Scrutiny
- **July 2025:** Final report to Scrutiny and GMCA