

# SAFER PARKS

Improving access for  
women and girls



Carl McClean, Green Flag Award International Development Manager, Keep Britain Tidy  
Email: [carl.mcclean@keepbritaintidy.org](mailto:carl.mcclean@keepbritaintidy.org)



**Dr. Anna Barker**  
University of Leeds



**Susannah Walker**  
Make Space for Girls



**Helen Forman**  
West Yorkshire Combined Authority



**Paul Todd MBE**

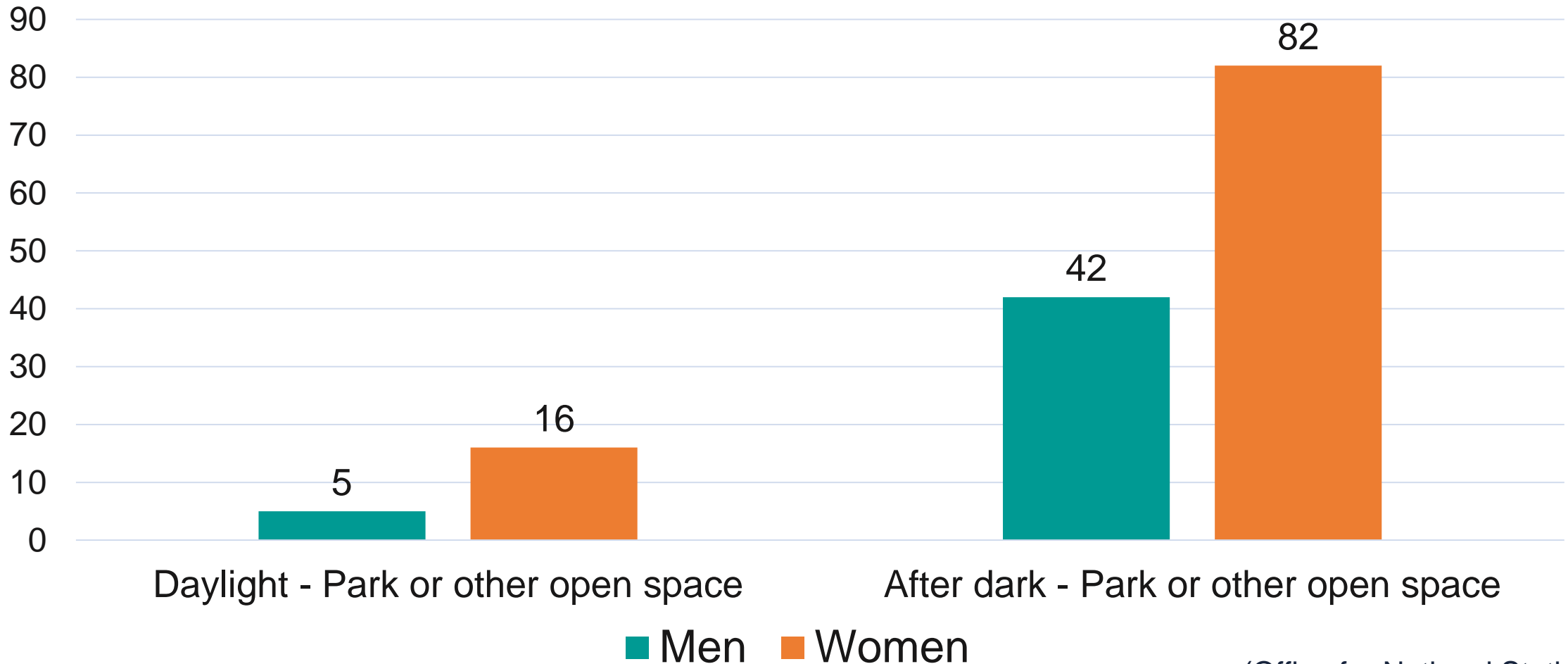


**Carl McClean**

Green Flag Award / Keep Britain Tidy

# What's the problem?

Proportion (%) of adults who felt 'very or fairly unsafe' alone by public setting, Great Britain



(Office for National Statistics, 2022)

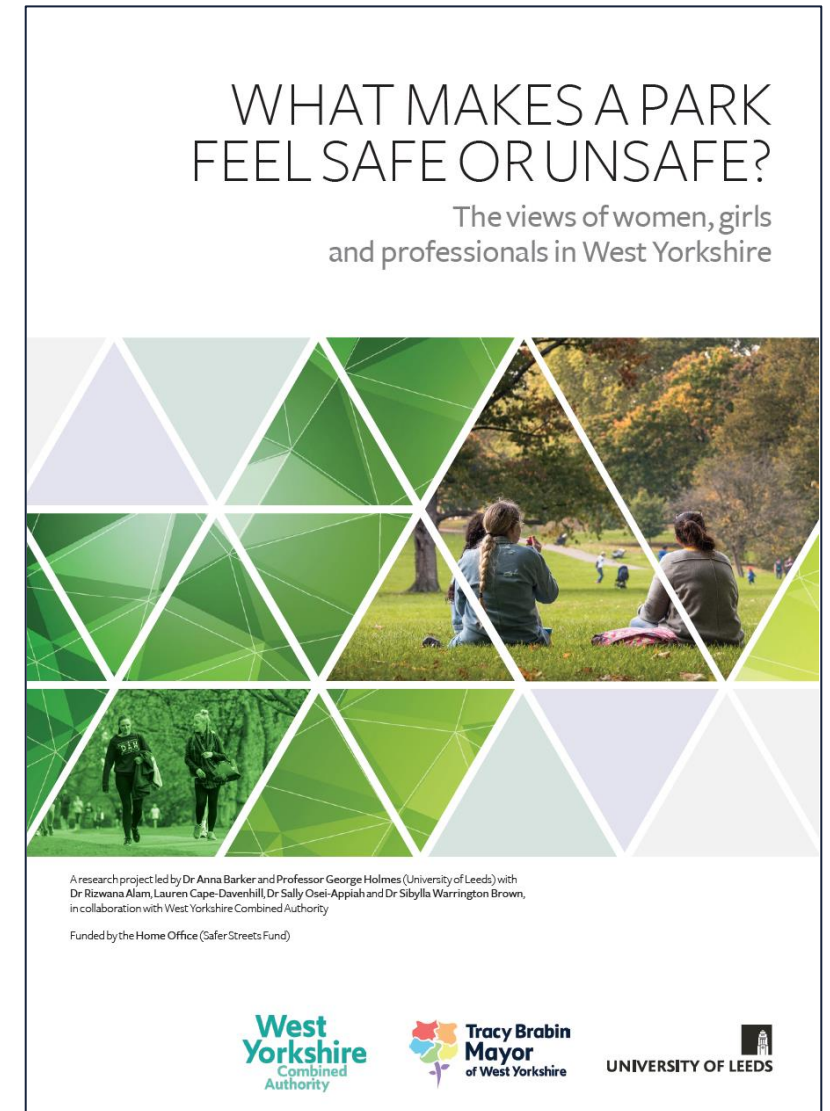
# The Research

1. What makes a park feel safe or unsafe?
2. How do the views of professionals compare with women and girls?

67  
Women

50  
Teenage girls

27  
Professionals



WHAT MAKES A PARK  
FEEL SAFE OR UNSAFE?  
The views of women, girls  
and professionals in West Yorkshire

A research project led by Dr Anna Barker and Professor George Holmes (University of Leeds) with Dr Rizwana Alam, Lauren Cape-Davenhill, Dr Sally Osei-Appiah and Dr Sibylla Warrington Brown, in collaboration with West Yorkshire Combined Authority  
Funded by the Home Office (Safer Streets Fund)

West Yorkshire  
Combined  
Authority

Tracy Brabin  
Mayor  
of West Yorkshire

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

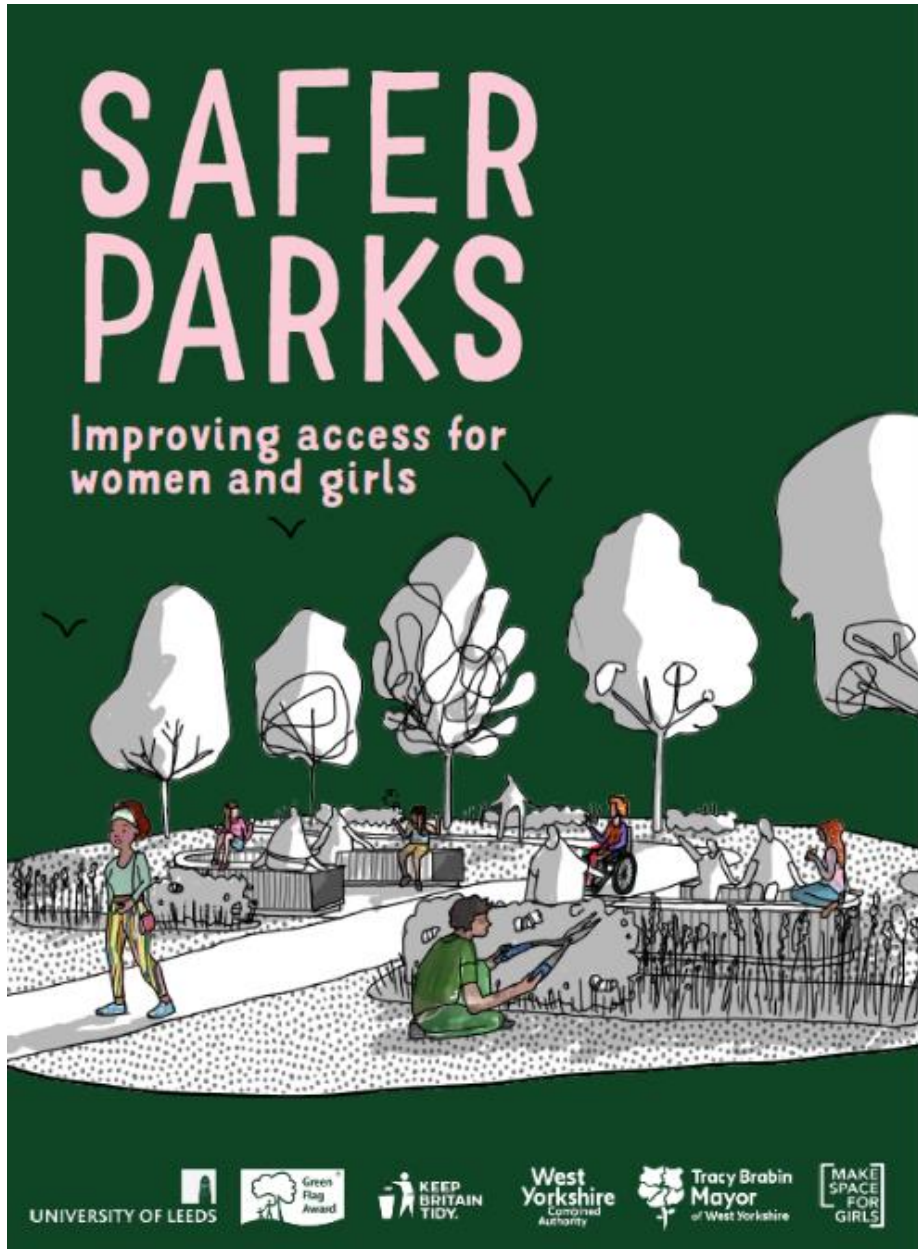
# What makes a park feel safe or unsafe?

Busyness	My identity	Attitudes towards women	Vegetation	Organised activities	Amenities e.g. cafes	Women-only areas	Exits
Police	Crime	Teenagers	Reputation	CCTV	Familiar parks	Fences or walls	Help points
Women	Drinking or drug use	Lone men	Mixed facilities	Lighting	Friends and family	Groups of men and boys	Mobile safety apps
Bystanders	People of similar identity	Teenagers	Park staff	Middle or edge of park	Harassment	Secluded areas	Darkness / daylight
Statues of women	Anti-social behaviour	Sightlines	Signage and maps	Walking boldly	Dogs	Personal safety measures	Tidy grass

'If you go to a park, you get basketball courts, you get football fields, you get gym stuff, skating stuff... it aims at men, so like there's **nothing that aims for women to do in a park.**'

'Someone in the park that you could go to... a **woman** that works around the park.'

'It's not the women's responsibility to take safety measures, it's the **men's responsibility** not to do it. And **society's responsibility** to educate men...'





## Purpose and aims:

- *To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live.*
- *To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.*

*\*As well as: To establish standards of good management. To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector. To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers.*



Birkenhead Park, The Wirral, UK  
Green Flag Award winner since 2007



# 1996



**STANDARD**



**VOICE**



**INFLUENCE**

1. Australia
2. Austria
3. Belgium
4. Finland
5. France
6. Germany
7. Ireland
8. Mexico
9. The Netherlands
10. New Zealand
11. Portugal
12. Spain
13. Sweden
14. Turkey
15. United Arab Emirates
16. United Kingdom
17. USA



2,400+



South Bank Parklands, Brisbane  
Green Flag Award winner since 2014

City Parks

Nature Reserves

University Campuses

Woodlands

Neighbourhood Parks

Country Parks

Cemeteries / Burial Grounds

Botanic and Historic Gardens

# Consultation

- Parks managers
- Architects
- Landscape architects
- Planners
- Academics
- Neighbourhood policing
- Park friends' groups
- Women's safety services



Historic  
England



Landscape  
Institute  
Inspiring great places



LIGHT  
FOLLOWS  
BEHAVIOUR



LONDON LEGACY  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

# SAFER PARKS

Improving access for  
women and girls



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



West  
Yorkshire  
Combined  
Authority



EYES ON  
THE PARK

AWARENESS

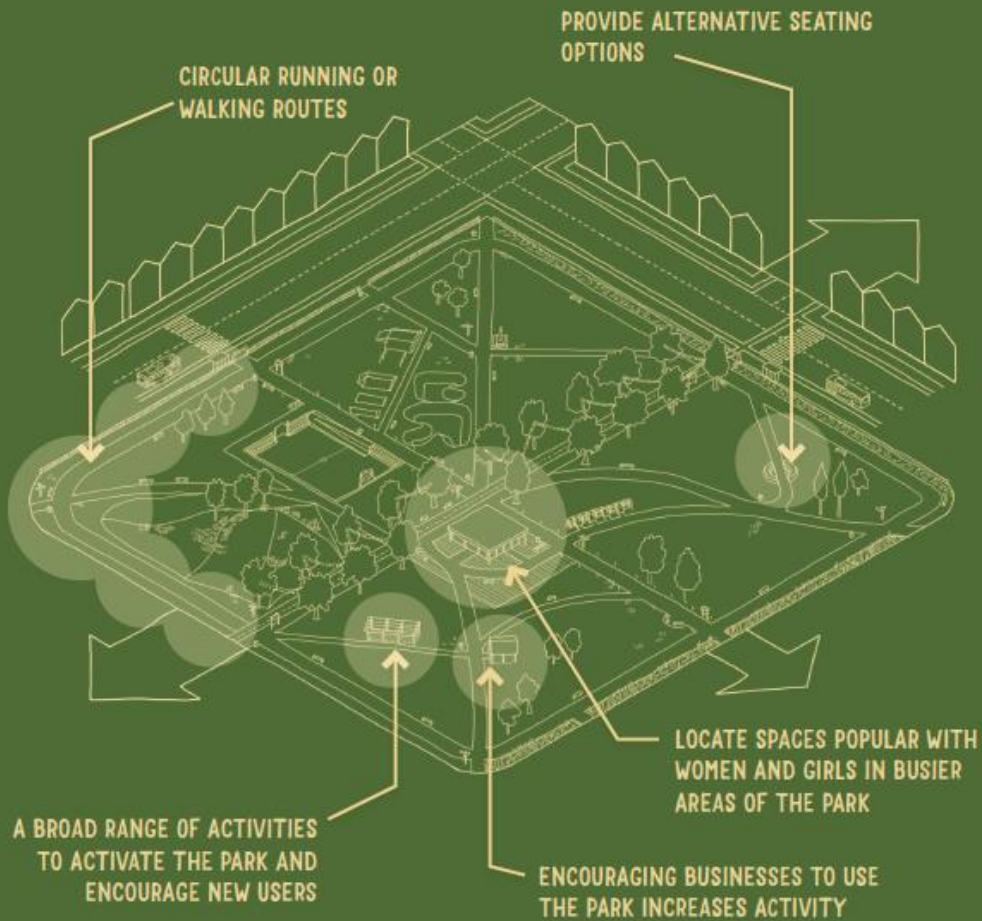
INCLUSION

# PRINCIPLES



- EYES ON THE PARK
  - Busyness and Activation
  - Staffing and Authority Figures
- AWARENESS
  - Visibility and Openness
  - Escape
  - Lighting
  - Wayfinding and Layout
- INCLUSION
  - Belonging and Familiarity
  - Image
  - Access and Location
  - Co-production and Engagement

# BUSYNESS AND ACTIVATION



- **Facilities**
- **Seating**
- **Active Travel**

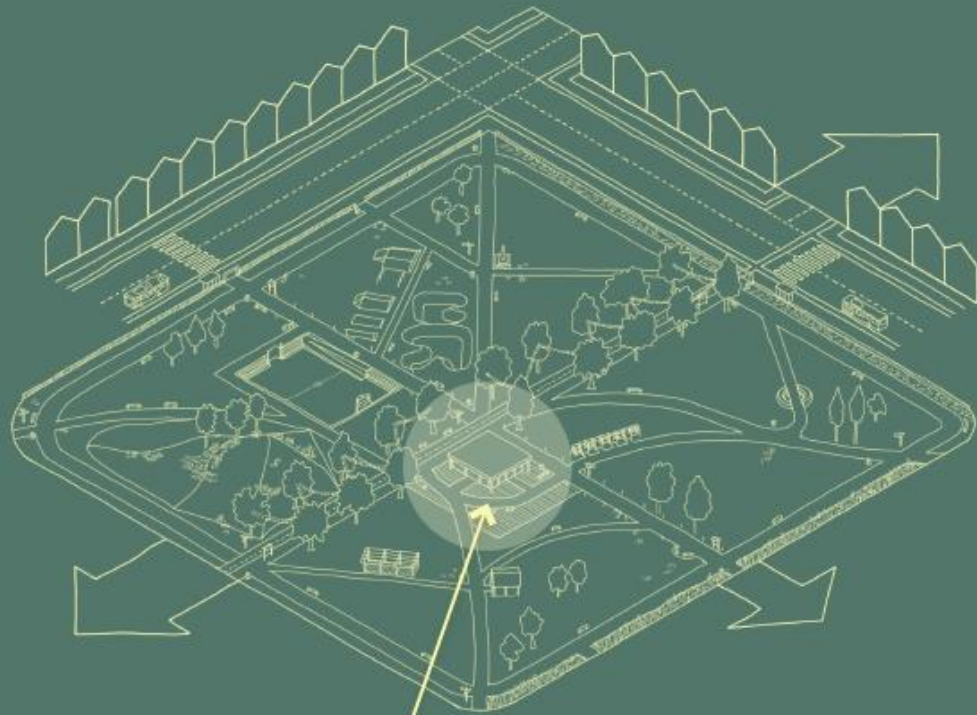
- **Activities for women**
- **General activation**

“

I think having other women and girls there, especially ones that are on their own, it makes you feel a lot better.

”

# STAFFING AND AUTHORITY FIGURES



ARRANGE WORKING PATTERNS TO  
MAXIMISE STAFF PRESENCE

- **Staff management**
- **Technological eyes**

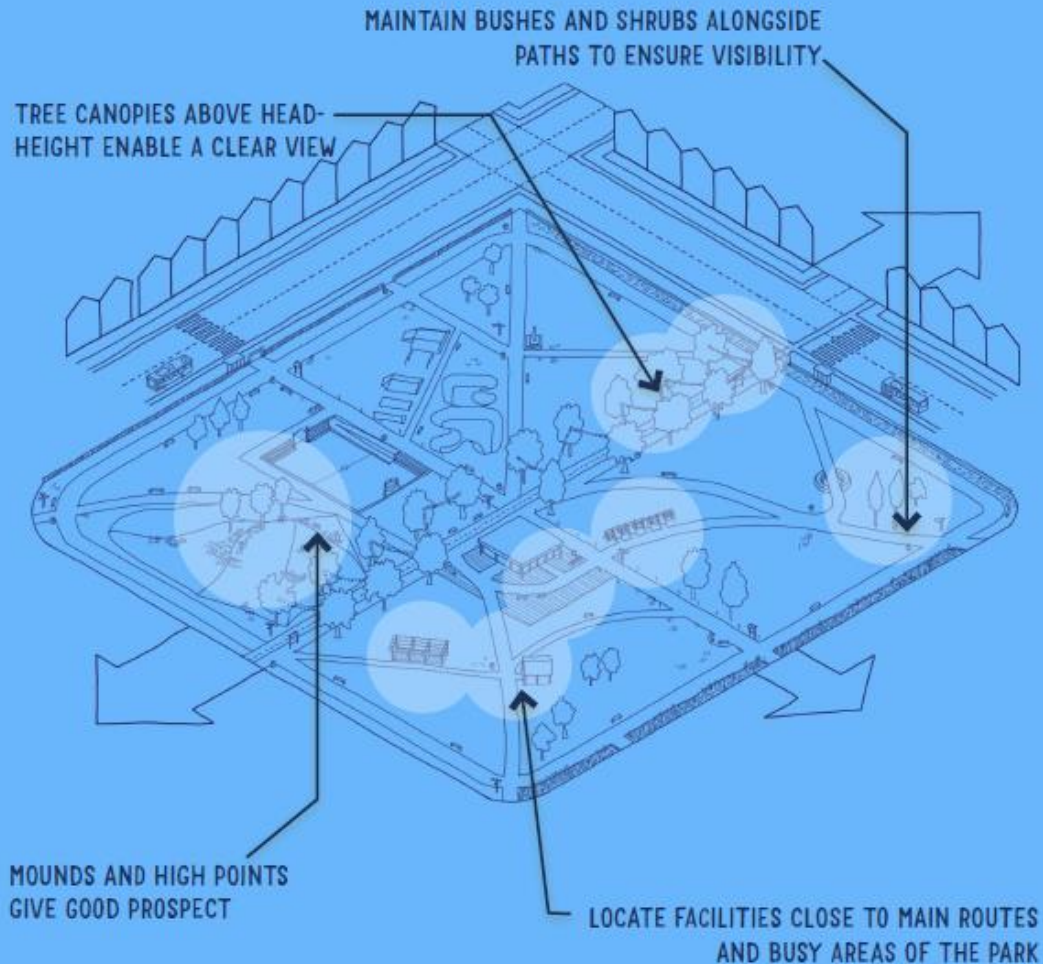
“

Maybe if there was someone in the park that you could go to... A woman police officer, or a woman that works around the park. So if they see anything going on, they could prevent it from happening.

”



# VISIBILITY AND OPENNESS



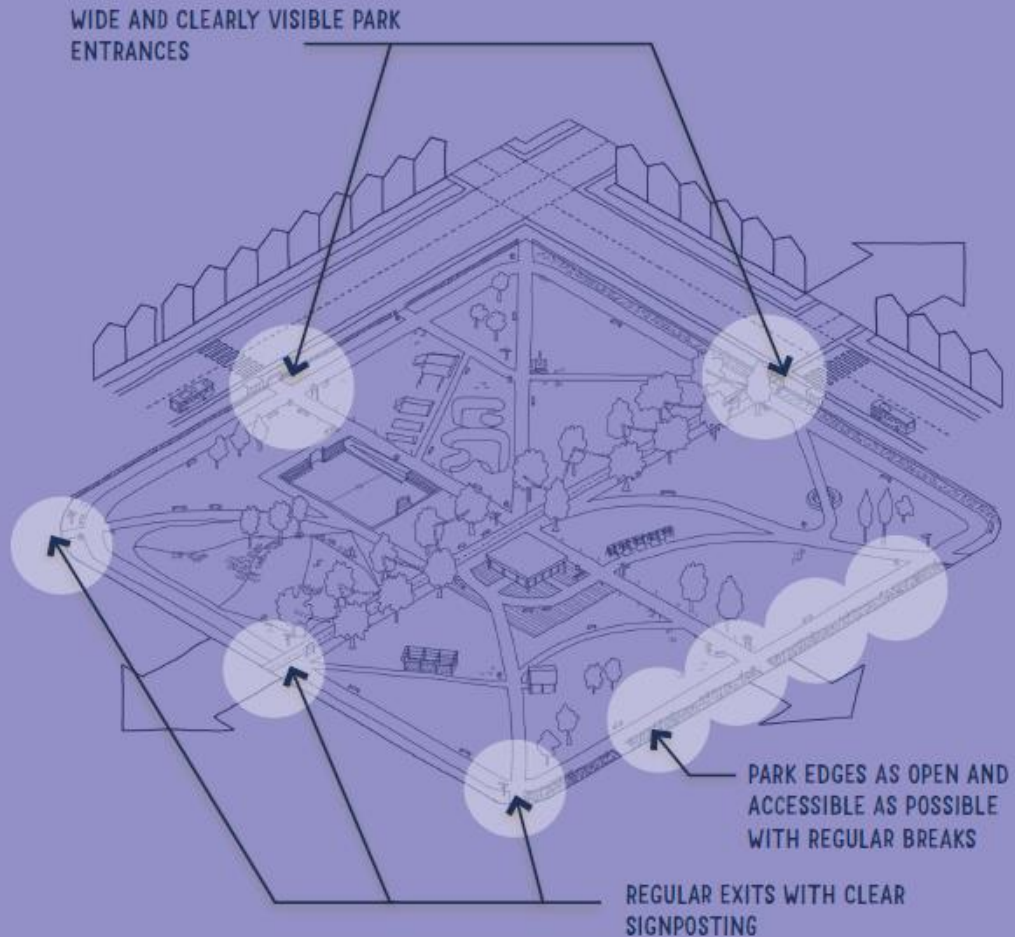
- **Vegetation**
- **Facilities**
- **Landscaping**

“

So parks with thick vegetation, hedges, trees, no I don't feel safer... [the council] have thinned things quite a lot so there is more visibility and that feels really good.

”

# ESCAPE



- Perimeters and entrances
- Paths
- Facilities
- Park layout

“ I don't really like that one [a MUGA] because there's only... one entrance to get out... you'd feel trapped. ”

# LIGHTING

HUMAN-SCALED LIGHTING  
RATHER THAN FLOODLIGHTS

LOW AND EVEN LIGHT CAN BE SAFER  
THAN BRIGHT LIGHTS THAT CREATE  
STRONG CONTRAST AND GLARE



LIGHTING SHOULD ENABLE GOOD  
COLOUR RENDERING

USING LIGHTING HELPS ACTIVATE  
KEY ROUTES AND SPACES

- Important, but tricky!
- Lighting and nature

“

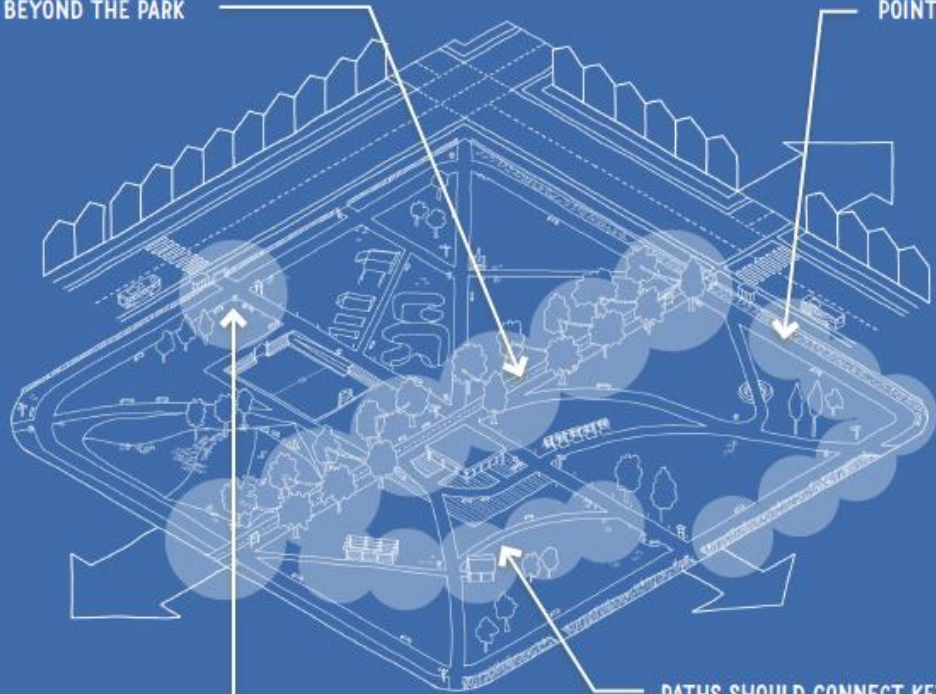
Light automatically makes  
it feel safer because you  
can see what's going on  
around you and you can  
pre-prepare for things.

”

# WAYFINDING AND LAYOUT

A CLEAR HIERARCHY OF PATHS WHICH CONNECT WITH ROUTES BEYOND THE PARK

CIRCULAR PATH AROUND THE PERIMETER WITH REGULAR EXIT POINTS



CLEAR SIGNAGE WITH DIRECTIONS TO KEY DESTINATIONS

PATHS SHOULD CONNECT KEY FACILITIES WITH EACH DESTINATION VISIBLE FROM THE LAST

- Intuitive wayfinding
- Good signage

- Variety and nature

- Multiple spaces
- Facility design

“

...if a girl goes there,  
like a group of girls, they  
[boys]’ll just kick you out.

”

# BELONGING AND FAMILIARITY

NAMING OF FACILITIES TO SIGNAL  
MULTIPLE USES BROADENS THEIR  
APPEAL



SPECIFIC FACILITIES AIMED  
AT WOMEN AND GIRLS  
SIGNAL THAT THEY ARE  
WELCOME

STATUES AND ARTWORKS CAN  
INDICATE BELONGING

- Indicating belonging
- Inclusion for everyone
- Toilets

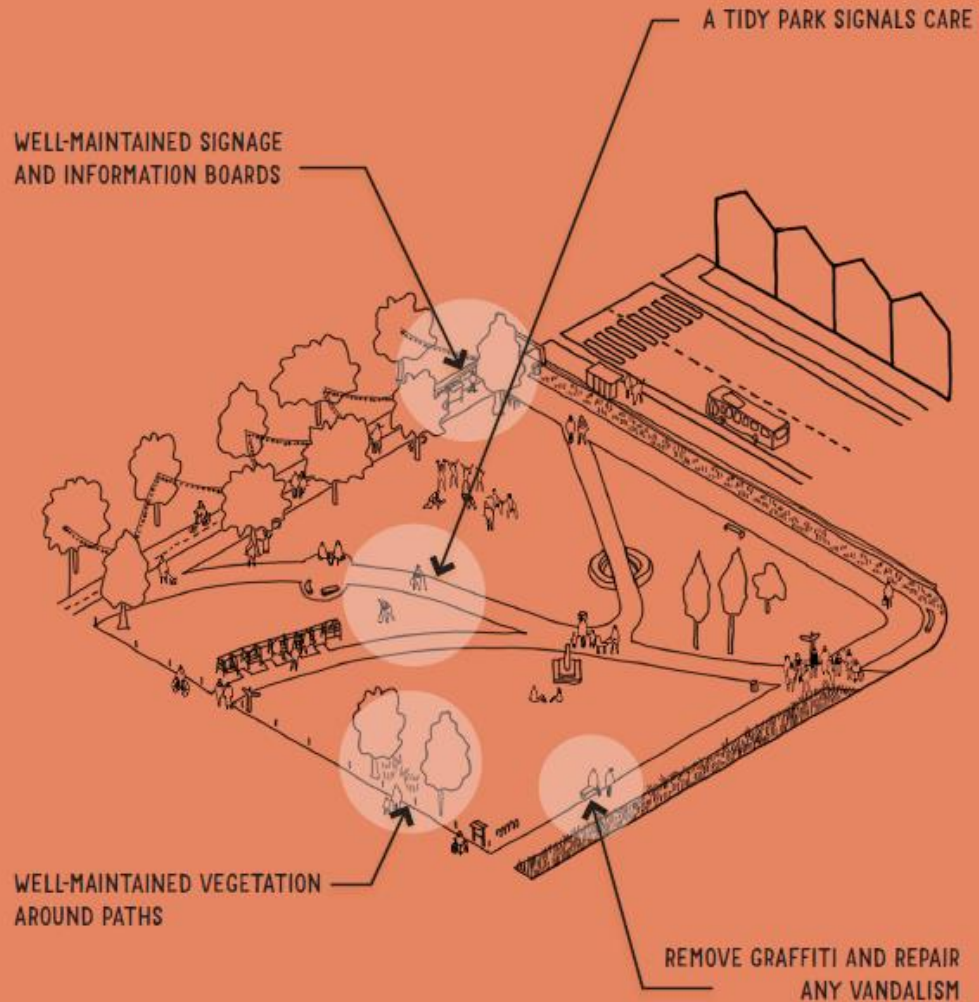
- Familiarity and design

“

I just feel that if there is somebody that looks like you and you just automatically feel that you are not on your own for some reason.

”

# IMAGE



- **Litter**
- **Maintenance**
- **Management**
- **Communications**

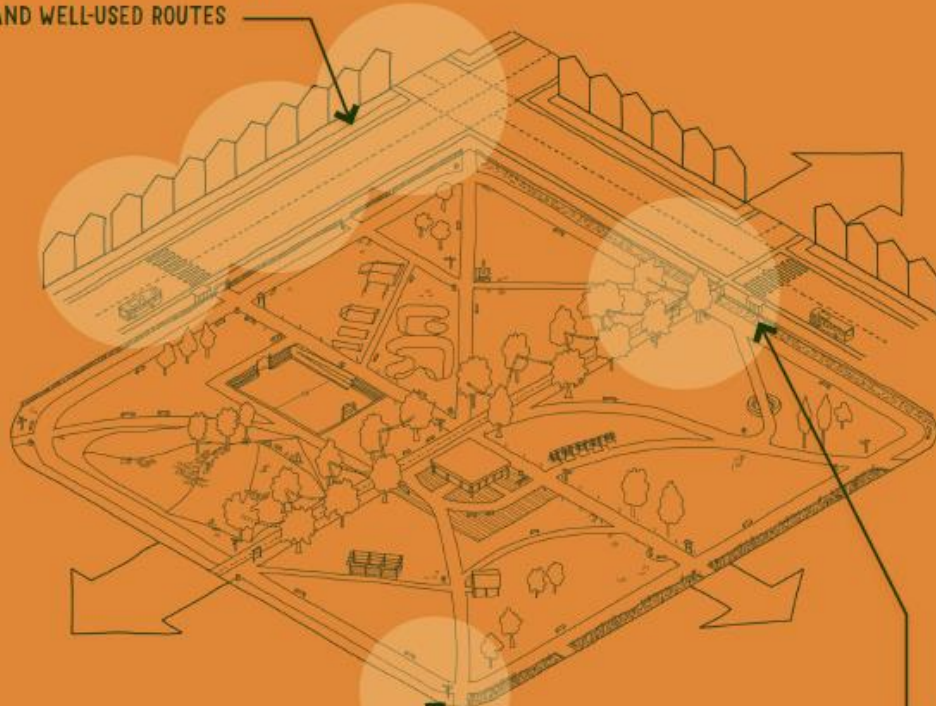
“

If it's a scruffy park with rubbish and needles and graffiti, you know that it's neglected and it just doesn't feel as nice an environment just to, you don't want to spend your time in there do you.

”

# ACCESS AND LOCATION

ACCESS SHOULD BE VIA SAFE AND WELL-USED ROUTES



SIGNPOST NEARBY PLACES AS 'SAFE ZONES'

PRIORITISE ENTRANCES CLOSE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS

- **Transport**
- **Planning**

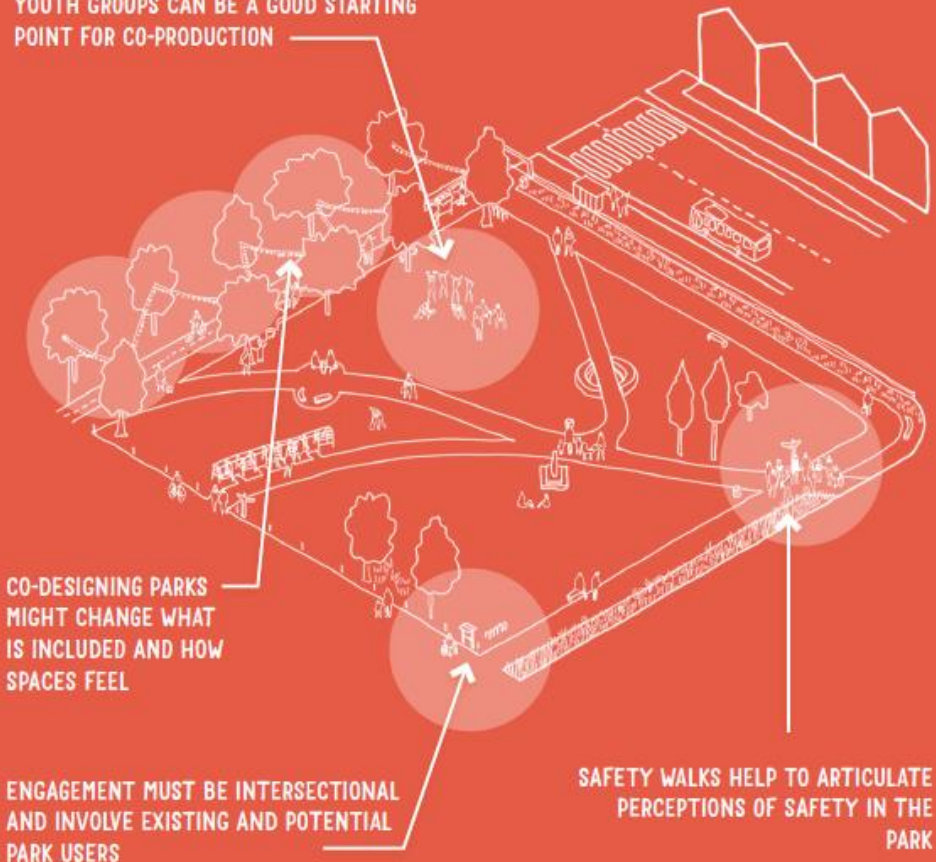
“

‘The state of it. You’d have a swing set without the swings. They would have been taken away having been vandalised. We’d spend most money on transport to get to another park that was better maintained.’

”

# CO-PRODUCTION AND ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT WITH EXISTING WOMEN'S AND YOUTH GROUPS CAN BE A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR CO-PRODUCTION



- Co-production
- Engaging the whole community
- Safety Walks

- Intersectionality

“ If they were designed with women you would see lighting better, I think you would see signs, you would see more patrolling. Yes I think that’s important. ”



# CASE STUDIES

- Vienna : Gender Mainstreaming in Parks
- Umeå : Inclusive City for Women and Girls
- Her Barking : Low Cost Interventions for Change
- Wakefield : Bringing Women into the Park
- Southwark : Lighting for the Community
- Toronto : Women Managing the Park
- Bradford : Active Spaces for Teenage Girls
- York : Community Engagement
- London: Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park - Information for Safety
- Sweden : Inclusive Skateparks



# Take action!



Parks & Green Spaces

## Resources Hub

[www.greenflagaward.org](http://www.greenflagaward.org)



The Safer Parks Consortium (UK)

**Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls (Summary)**

**(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY) - 5 minute read**

An executive summary of the hugely informative guidance on Designing, Managing and Maintaining safer, more inclusive parks.



The Safer Parks Consortium (UK)

**Safer Parks: Improving access for women and girls**

**(FULL VERSION) - Long read**

This new guidance focuses on how design, management and maintenance can be improved to create better parks for women and girls safety.



Make Space for Girls (UK)

**Make Space for Girls - the research background 2023**

**Long read**

An excellent report that compiles the research and data about teenage girls and parks: how much do they use them, or not, and how you can help.



City Parks Alliance (USA)

**Active Parks Healthy Cities**

**25 minute read**

A USA national study to identify how parks in America's cities encourage people to be physically active. Features gender specific data on park use.



Jelena Kocmaruk (Canada)

**Measuring park quality for youth**

**1 hour read**

A brilliant report with case studies that seeks to better understand how public parks can meet the diverse needs of adolescents.



Tbilisi Municipality (Georgia)

**Fair shared green and recreational spaces**

**Long read**

Tbilisi is one of only a handful of cities around the world that have written guidance for more gender inclusive public spaces. Could you be the next?

# Next steps...



- Review the guidance in your organisation
- Share the guidance with:
  - Academics
  - Politicians
  - Senior leadership
  - Key decision makers / stakeholders
  - Funders
- Further research / investigation



- Home
- Shorts
- Subscriptions

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- History
- Your videos
- Watch Later
- Black History Month
- Show more

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### Explore

- Trending
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- Movies & TV



## Women and Girls Safety in Parks Symposium recordings

Green Flag Award

Public

9 videos 15 views Last updated on 4 Oct 2023



Play all

Shuffle

Recordings of the speakers at the Women and Girls Safety in Parks Symposium organised by Leeds University School of Law and held on the 10th & 11th May 2023.

Sort



Dr Anna Barker, University of Leeds - 'What makes a park feel safe and unsafe?'

Green Flag Award • 11 views • 3 months ago



Dr. Rachel Hewitt. Day 1 Keynote: Women and Girls' Safety in Parks symposium, Leeds, May 2023

Green Flag Award • 27 views • 3 months ago



Dr Julia King, LSE Cities, London School of Economics - Lessons from Research

Green Flag Award • 14 views • 2 months ago



Professor Rachel Pain. Women and Girls' Safety in Parks symposium: Leeds, May 2023

Green Flag Award • 7 views • 2 months ago



Tanya Martin, Women In Sport - Contextualising Women and Girls' Safety in Parks

Green Flag Award • No views • 2 weeks ago



Jeannette Morris-Boam, Leeds Women's Aid - Contextualising Women and Girls' Safety in Parks

Green Flag Award • No views • 2 weeks ago

# Safe Spaces

Understanding and enhancing safety and inclusion  
for diverse women



MONASH  
University



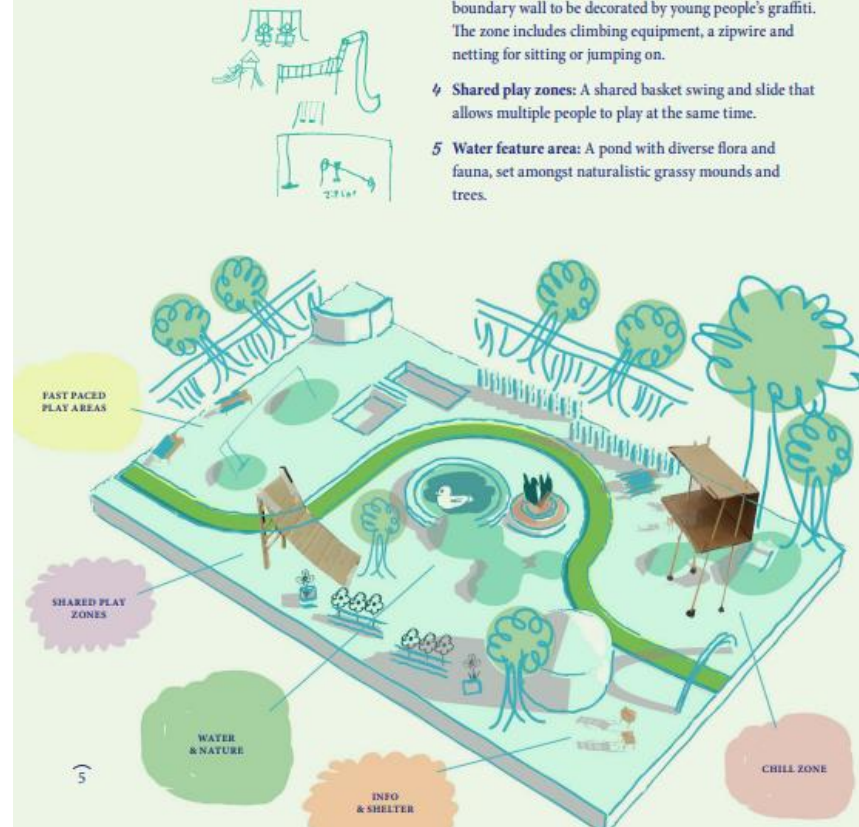
June 2023



### Greenspace design

Given a currently empty tarmac area in their local Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground as a potential site, the young women designed their "ideal park" within the space. It contained five zones, with a meandering path and foliage to separate the spaces:

- 1 **Information & refuge zone:** To protect visitors from the elements and encourage social engagement by providing a small social shelter located by the entrance and accessible information to encourage them to explore.
- 2 **Chill zone:** A secluded chill zone amongst foliage for visitors who wish to unwind with treehouse and hammocks, and seating for social opportunities.
- 3 **Fast-paced play zone:** Play spaces where faster-paced games could be enjoyed, bordered by a permeable boundary wall to be decorated by young people's graffiti. The zone includes climbing equipment, a zipwire and netting for sitting or jumping on.
- 4 **Shared play zones:** A shared basket swing and slide that allows multiple people to play at the same time.
- 5 **Water feature area:** A pond with diverse flora and fauna, set amongst naturalistic grassy mounds and trees.



## Research Report 2023

The Make Space for Girls report on what research and data can tell us about teenage girls and parks.

Councils

Design professionals

Other supporters

Developers



## Parkwatch

In May 2023, Make Space for Girls asked people to take part in a citizen science project, counting how many teenagers were using the facilities in...

All



## Inclusive Spaces for Girls and Young People - A Short Guide

An introduction to designing better for teenage girls produced by us for Homes England.

Councils

Other supporters



## Safer Parks for Women and Girls Guidance

Clear guidance on how to create parks in which women and girls feel safe and welcome

All



## Q&A on the Public Sector Equality Duty

Guidance written with law firm Weightmans on the Public Sector Equality Duty, and its importance for councils who want to make parks more welcomin...

Councils



## Researchers In Residence Report

Report on a series of workshops run by us, Countryside and LSE Cities, developing peer research methods for engaging with teenage girl...

All







# DESIGN GUIDANCE: CREATING PLACES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



July 2024

Safety and Belonging for Women  
and Girls in Public Spaces

Community Research in East London

PREPARED FOR  
LONDON LEGACY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
OCTOBER 2023



# IMPACT

- **Adopted by Green Flag Award as supplementary guidance (the programme is owned by the UK Government)**
- **Keep Britain Tidy training Green Flag Award judges at regional annual debriefs and online webinars**
- **The UK Government All-Party Parliamentary Group for Parks and Green Spaces debated the guidance and park safety in June 2023**
- **Sport England parliamentary round table used the guidance to identify opportunities for making sport/activity safer for women in October 2023**
- **West Yorkshire – Informing the Mayor’s Police and Crime Plan**
- **To date - 80 Park Managers and volunteers have been trained as “active bystanders” by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust (1986)**



“It’s about being  
**SAFE**  
on my  
**OWN** ...I am  
independent,  
and I would like to  
**feel that**”

# SAFER PARKS



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# Thank You

Carl McClean, Green Flag Award International Development Manager, Keep Britain Tidy  
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