Women & Girls
Safety Charter

Creating safer spaces for women and girls'

Broadland District Council




Brighter
Together

Women & Girls' Safety Charter: Broadland

Foreword

Women and girls deserve to feel safe in every part of our community, and we all have a role to play in making that a reality. No one should have to limit their activities or alter their daily routines, because of valid concerns about harassment, intimidation, or violence. Yet we know that too many women and girls continue to do this because they feel unsafe or unwelcome in public spaces.

Staring, "catcalling", and inappropriate comments, are just some of the unwanted behaviours that women and girls regularly experience throughout their daily lives. Not only can they make women feel reluctant to freely take up space, but if left unchallenged, those behaviours can escalate and lead to serious harm.

The Women & Girls' Safety Charter represents our commitment to addressing this problem. It sets out a clear and practical approach that brings together partners from across the district, including businesses, public venues, community organisations, public services and residents, to create environments where women and girls feel welcome, supported and safe.

This Charter has been shaped by the voices of local women. Their experiences, concerns, and suggestions have guided each part of our work. Their insight highlights that safety is not only about preventing harm, but also about building confidence, improving environments, and supporting the cultural change needed to ensure that women and girls can move freely through their communities.

We also recognise that no single organisation can address these challenges alone. So, by working together, sharing responsibility and promoting respectful behaviour, we can create lasting change and strengthen the sense of safety and belonging across our district.

As a council, we are committed to leading this work and supporting our partners to deliver the actions set out in the Charter. We would like to thank all those who shaped this important document by contributing their time, expertise and lived experience, together, we can help to ensure that Broadland is a place where women and girls feel safe, confident and able to thrive.

What is a Safety Charter?

The Women and Girls' Safety Charter for Broadland are focused on improving feelings of safety for women and girls in public spaces. The Charter helps support the creation and maintenance of environments where women and girls feel welcomed, supported and confident in their day-to-day lives. This charter does not create change on its own. Rather, it provides a shared framework and commitment that organisations and individuals can choose to sign up to in order to create change.

Broadland includes a mix of towns, villages, rural and suburban areas. The Charter recognises that women and girls move through a wide variety of settings, (workplaces, leisure facilities, green spaces, transport routes and residential areas) and should feel safe in all of them.

This charter aligns with our strategic priorities to empower individuals and communities and to create a sustainable and resilient local economy.





What's the problem?

National evidence shows that women and girls continue to feel disproportionately unsafe in many everyday settings. The scale of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is now so great, that in 2024, the National Police Chief's Council named VAWG a national threat to public safety.

A survey carried out by the Opinions and Lifestyle survey (2022) found that 11% of people felt unsafe in parks during the day, rising to 63% after dark, with women feeling less safe than men across all settings after dark.

Fears about harassment or violence, of which 27% of women experienced nationally last year, can limit women's daily activities and increase marginalisation. Evidence shows that women experience harassment at almost double the rate of men. Many women adjust their behaviour, avoiding certain routes, reducing time outdoors, avoiding exercise after dark or relying on others to accompany them, in order to feel safer. These restrictions affect women's freedom of movement and their ability to participate in work, education, leisure and community life, placing unequal expectations on women to manage their own safety.

The Charter recognises that preventing harm is not only about responding to incidents, but also about addressing the social conditions, attitudes, and behaviours that allow harassment and intimidation towards women and girls to persist.

This Charter aims to prevent escalating and ongoing negative behaviours and emphasises the role of communities, workplaces, services, and local authorities. It does this by encouraging early action, challenging harmful behaviour, improving everyday environments, and strengthening shared responsibility, rather than relying solely on responses after harm has occurred.

"If going out for a run or walk in the countryside I never feel safe on my own"

(The Women and Girls Safety Charter Survey)

How safe do women and girls feel in Broadland?



The Charter has been shaped by feedback from local women and girls. An anonymous survey gathered residents' feelings of safety and explored behaviours or locations that influence how safe they feel. Additional insight came from focus groups and community feedback.

The findings show that although safety concerns affect everyone, women feel disproportionately unable to move freely, exercise or socialise, especially after dark.

As women and girls feel safer and more confident, overall community activity, visibility and natural surveillance increase, benefiting the whole district. When women and girls participate more readily in their communities, everyone benefits.

Survey findings show that a majority feel safe during the daytime, while far fewer feel safe after dark. The behaviours most affecting safety in the daytime relate to men's behaviour, while lack of lighting is the primary concern at night. 18–24-year-olds felt the least safe in the day, and 45–54-year-olds felt the least safe after dark. Perception of safety is subjective and varies between individuals, according to their experiences and lifestyles.

The results of the survey and focus groups have been separated into four distinct themes.

Themes 1 and 2 relate to the factors which influence feelings of vulnerability whilst themes 3 and 4 identify factors which support feelings of safety. These are explored further below.

> "Groups of men who make comments, stare, touching and whistling make me feel unsafe"
>
> (The Women and Girls Safety Charter Survey)

Theme 1: Spaces

Local survey and focus group feedback was consistent with national patterns: women in Broadland identified both environmental and behavioural factors that reduce confidence in using public spaces. The table below lists the top 5 environments where women in Broadland reported feeling the least safe and why they felt that way:

Table 1: Public spaces in Broadland where women and girls feel most vulnerable

RANK	LOCATION	EXPLANATION
ONE	Streets	Concerns about strangers, darkness at night, isolation
TWO	Parks / outdoor spaces	Poor lighting, wooded or secluded areas
THREE	Public transport	Concerns when waiting alone or travelling alone
FOUR	Bars / pubs	Drunken or aggressive behaviour
FIVE	Taxis	Anxiety about travelling alone

Theme 2: Behaviours

Participants described behaviours that increased feelings of discomfort or threat in public spaces. These included:

- Intimidating or aggressive behaviour, particularly group or "pack" behaviour, often from men or teenage boys, which can feel overwhelming and targeted.
- Shouting, catcalling or verbal comments, which draw unwanted attention.
- Unwanted staring, especially in isolated or quiet areas.

"Male dominated spaces (such as gyms and pubs) can feel intimidating"

(The Women and Girls Safety Charter Survey)

Theme 3: Culture and Community Environment

Many women emphasised the need for deeper, long-term social change. This involved:

- Encouraging respectful behaviour, challenging harmful norms and attitudes.
- Raising awareness among men and boys, promoting understanding of how certain behaviours affect women's daily lives.
- Normalising active bystander intervention, so community members feel confident challenging inappropriate behaviour.
- Creating environments where women feel welcome, supported and included, not just physically safe.

These actions may be delivered by a mix of local organisations, employers, education providers and community groups, supported by shared resources and existing training where possible (see appendix A and B).

Theme 4: Suggested Solutions

Women identified a range of practical changes that would help them feel safer in their everyday environments. We have grouped these into culture, policy, and design, recognising that safety is about more than physical changes alone. It is shaped by behaviour, systems and the spaces people use every day, as well as how people interact within them.

When these three elements work together, they create environments where women and girls not only are safe but genuinely feel safe.

CULTURE	POLICY	DESIGN
Awareness campaign for behaviour change, including active bystander messaging and training School and college education on respect and harassment	Clear safety expectations for organisations; licensing conditions for venues (e.g., staff training, incident logging, "Ask for Angela" awareness) Roles working with children or vulnerable adults may require enhanced DBS checks Women's sessions (gyms/ Policy parks) to increase visibility and natural surveillance	Support to help businesses and organisations design safer environments, informed by visibility, lighting, clear routes and lived experience Improved lighting and CCTV in priority locations Transport enhancements (e.g., better lighting at stops, clearer information, safer route wayfinding)

Not all actions will be appropriate or affordable for every organisation. The Charter encourages proportionate, realistic steps and exploration of partnerships or phased improvements where needed.

How the charter will work

Considering the themes and issues highlighted above, we recognise the need for a shared commitment to work differently and more collaboratively.

Both Theme 3 (Culture and Community Environment) and Theme 4 (Suggested Solutions) reflect a prevention-led approach, while also recognising the role of deterrent measures. Physical interventions such as CCTV and improved lighting can deter harmful behaviour in specific locations and reduce immediate risk, but they do not always prevent harm from occurring and may shift activity elsewhere if used in isolation. In contrast, longer-term approaches, including education, cultural change and normalising bystander intervention, aim to prevent harm by challenging attitudes and behaviours before incidents occur, though these shifts take time to embed. A balanced approach is therefore needed, combining short-term deterrents with sustained preventative action to improve safety both now and in the future.

"Educate men and boys. Stop expecting women to protect themselves. Teach people not to abuse others"

(The Women and Girls Safety Charter Survey)

"Walking through certain areas such as empty parks feels unsafe"

(The Women and Girls Safety Charter Survey)

The Charter operates through shared responsibility and recognises that organisations vary in size, capacity and the spaces they manage. Signing up to the Charter reflects a commitment to take proportionate and achievable action, with organisations encouraged to build on this over time, which may involve self-funding proportionate changes, supported by guidance, good practice and partnership support.

All organisations signing the Charter are expected, as a minimum, to:

- Promote positive behaviour and challenge harmful attitudes against women
- Take a compassionate, prevention-led approach that supports wellbeing

Depending on their role, capacity and the nature of the space they manage, organisations may also choose to:

- Review their spaces ensuring that the differing elements of culture, policy, and design are considered
- Improve environmental safety (lighting, layout, visibility) on land they own/manage
- Talk to the people who use their spaces (e.g., customers, visitors, staff) so changes are informed by the lived experiences of women and girls
- Challenge harmful attitudes
- Ensure staff receive relevant training
- Provide clear reporting pathways for incidents of harassment, unsafe behaviour, or environmental concerns.

This model aligns with national expectations that improving women's safety requires a coordinated, multiagency effort to reduce risk and increase women's sense of safety through prevention and early intervention.



Can I have an impact as an individual?



Yes! This Charter is not just about the impact which can be had by organisations, but also the impact of small actions taken by individuals.

By challenging behaviours early, appropriately and promoting a culture of mutual respect, individuals have the power to build a community where women and girls feel safer and more confident. Inappropriate conduct, even that perceived to be "low level", which is not challenged, normalises those behaviours and it becomes a part of accepted culture. It is in these circumstances where more extreme examples of harmful conduct can easily manifest.

Measuring Impact

Broadland District Council will work with communities, businesses and local organisations to understand whether the Charter is making a real difference.

We will keep listening to women and girls through surveys, feedback and conversations to understand how the changes being made affect their sense of safety. We will also keep track of the practical actions taken by organisations that sign up to the Charter, as promote them as examples of good practice.

As a signatory to the Charter, the Council will lead by example as well as measuring the impact of actions taken by others. Together, this will help ensure the Charter leads to meaningful and lasting improvements in women and girls' safety across Broadland.

Summary

The Women & Girls' Safety Charter for Broadland sets out a shared commitment to improving how safe women and girls feel in everyday places. It recognises that safety is shaped not only by physical environments, but by behaviour, attitudes and how communities respond to harm.

Developed using local insight and national evidence, the Charter encourages communities, businesses, organisations and public services to take realistic, proportionate action, from promoting respectful behaviour and challenging harassment, to making improvements to spaces and support routes. The Charter is not about doing everything at once, but about taking meaningful steps and building on them over time.

By working together and listening to the experiences of women and girls, the Charter aims to encourage safer, more welcoming environments where women and girls can live their lives freely and confidently across Broadland, enabling them to participate fully in community life and reach their full potential without fear or limitation.

This charter has been created in partnership with women's safety consultant Karen Whybro, who has supported its development.

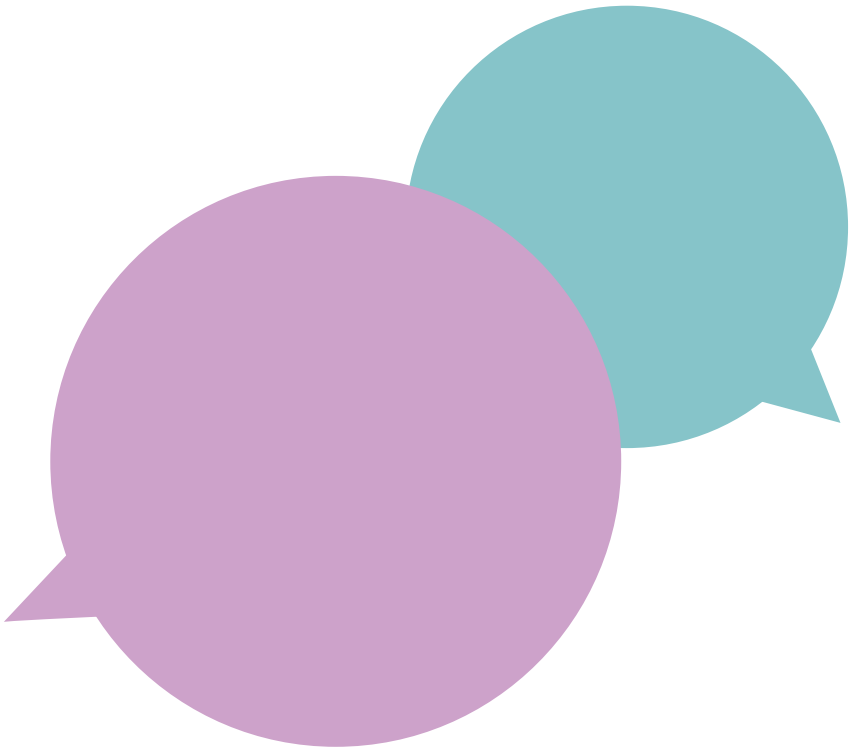


Appendix A –

Signposting – Getting Support

Below is a range of local and national organisations offering support, advice or specialist help for anyone experiencing harassment, abuse or violence. These services provide confidential information, emotional support, and emergency assistance.

- **Dawn's New Horizon –** https://dawnsnewhorizon.org.uk
- **NIDAS – Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service –** https://nidasnorfolk.co.uk
- **Rape Crisis –** https://rapecrisis.org.uk
- **Refuge –** https://www.refuge.org.uk
- **South Norfolk & Broadland Councils – Help Hub –** https://www.southnorfolkand-broadland.gov.uk/communities/help-hub
- **Sue Lambert Trust –** Sue Lambert Trust – Support for survivors of sexual violence and sexual abuse
- **The Harbour Centre –** The Harbour Centre – Sexual Assault Referral Centre
- **The Survivors' Trust –** https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org
- **Victim Support –** https://www.victimsupport.org.uk
- **Women's Aid –** https://www.womensaid.org.uk
- **YMCA Norfolk –** https://www.ymcanorfolk.org



Appendix B –

Training Resources

These training resources offer practical tools, learning opportunities, and evidence-based approaches that support organisations, staff and community members to strengthen their understanding of women's safety. They provide accessible ways to build skills, raise awareness and contribute to the cultural and behavioural change at the heart of this Charter.

- Allyship: The key to real culture change — White Ribbon UK
- Ask for Angela | Broadland and South Norfolk
- International Gender Champions - Free Online Courses on Gender-Based Violence
- UN Women Course Catalog for Mobile – Portal – UN Women Training Centre – Portal
- Sports & Safe Spaces: Tackling Public Sexual Harassment — Our Streets Now
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust Events
- UN Women Course Catalog for Mobile – Portal – UN Women Training Centre – Portal



Appendix C –

Sources

The sources listed below highlight the national evidence, research and policy that underpin this, Charter. They provide the wider context for our local findings and ensure that our approach is aligned with best practice, current strategy and the broader national response to violence against women and girls.

- **British Society of Criminology** – BSCN-Summer-2022-VAWG-in-public-spaces.pdf
- **End Violence Against Women Coalition** – https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/governments-landmark-vawg-strategy-published/
- **Government of the United Kingdom** – https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/deploying-the-full-power-of-the-state-to-tackle-vawg
- **Rights of Women** – https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/government-publishes-long-awaited-cross-government-vawg-strategy-rights-of-women-responds/

