

SAFER PARKS

Improving access for
women and girls

Executive Summary



Parks are essential for everyone

... they give us access to nature, spaces to relax and to meet friends, room for activity. A good park can be the heart of its community. But these benefits are not equally open to all.

Women and girls often do not feel safe in parks and so use them less. This is not just because they fear crime, whether that's rape, assault or harassment. They also feel uncomfortable, unwelcome and judged. Women are three times more likely than men to feel unsafe in parks during the day, and that gets worse after dark.

This is unfair and unequal – and it's what our new guidance on safer parks sets out to change.

It's based on research from the University of Leeds on what women and girls think would make parks safer, more attractive places where everyone feels they belong. The guidance is aimed at everyone who cares about how parks are designed and managed. Some of the suggested changes are simple and cheap, others more complex, but they are all designed to improve safety and inclusion.

Better design and management can't solve all the problems which keep women and girls out of parks, but with the right planning, funding and support, the benefits of parks and green spaces can be enjoyed **more equally by everyone**.

This guidance is where we begin.



Each principle in the guidance includes 'Quick Wins' – easy steps which can be taken immediately to create a safer park.

- Quick Wins**
- Adding gaps in fences can open up enclosed areas.
 - Removing at least one wall from a MUGA can make it feel less dangerous.
 - Where a facility has multiple gates, keep them all unlocked!
 - Where entrances have double gates, keep both open if possible.

- Quick Wins**
- Where routes such as Public Rights of Way or parts of the National Cycle Network run through the park, funding for lighting may be available.
 - Make sure existing lighting is well maintained and clear of vegetation.
 - Signpost which routes and areas of the park are well lit.



Ten principles

The guidance focuses on how design, management and maintenance can be used to create better parks. There are ten core principles under three themes.

Eyes on the Park	Awareness	Inclusion
<p>The presence of other people can make the park feel safer; either through activation which brings in other users or making the most of park staff and other officials.</p>	<p>The design of parks can make women and girls feel more secure in a space, helping them to see and be seen, ensuring they don't feel trapped and giving them the ability to navigate their surroundings.</p>	<p>How to create parks where all women and girls feel they belong by identifying and addressing the barriers which exist for different groups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUSINESS • • STAFFING • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VISIBILITY • • ESCAPE • • LIGHTING • • WAYFINDING • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BELONGING • • IMAGE • • ACCESS • • ENGAGEMENT •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using facilities and activation to bring people in • How measures like active travel can create busier parks • Ensuring activities are best designed to attract women and girls • The training and management of staff and volunteers to create safer parks • How opening up the park to businesses and voluntary groups improves safety • CCTV and help points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting and management of vegetation for visibility • The design and placement of facilities • Creating safer perimeters and entrances • A guide to lighting for safety • Dividing up spaces to create a more inclusive park • The importance of nature and variety in creating an attractive space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of belonging for a feeling of safety and how to enhance this • How facilities and design can indicate inclusion • Addressing litter, graffiti and maintenance as safety issues • Involving women and girls in park design and management • Using communications to create a park which feels safe for everyone • Ensuring access is not a barrier



Also included are ten case studies of projects which have created better parks for women and girls, from the UK and further beyond, along with many more examples of good design and practice.



Next steps

This guidance is only a starting point. To create change, it needs to be acted on.

The first step is to share both this summary and the full guidance document with as many people as possible, to ensure that the importance of safety is at the forefront of everyone's minds.

The safety of women and girls needs to be written into policy, considered in every design decision, planning statement and management process or evaluation.

Work with as many other partners as possible to create interventions and access funding which can be used to improve the park.

But don't wait. There are things that can be done immediately. Use the guidance to find what can be changed now. Look at the parks around you with different eyes.

Most crucially, the voices of women and girls need to be heard at every stage of the process.

Download the guidance from the Green Flag Award website and get started today.

greenflagaward.org

