

Safer Streets 3 – Public Consultation Results

Background

On March 15th in response to the death of Sarah Everard the government announced a third round of Safer Streets funding focused on making public spaces safer for women and girls.

The main aims of the fund are to:

- reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) and increase women and girls' feelings of safety in public spaces
- build the evidence base for what works on reducing VAWG crimes and increasing feelings of safety in the public domain
- improve both the national and local data picture regarding VAWG crimes in public spaces, which could include increased reporting for some crime types
- Make public spaces safer for all

Within Cleveland an online public consultation was launched to ensure that the multi agency funding bid submitted by partners reflected the needs of the local community. The survey was only open to people who identified as female and ran for just over 3 weeks from 20th May to 11th June. The survey was designed with the assistance of domestic and sexual abuse support agencies.

Results

Demographics

In total 1206 responses were received to the consultation.

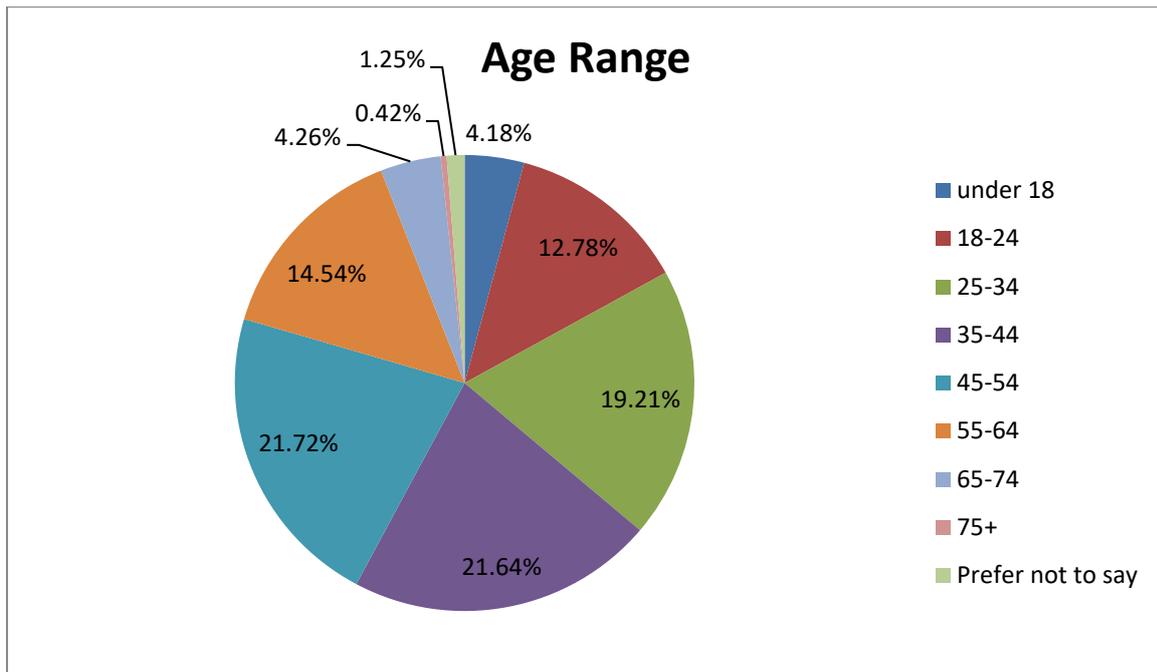
Responses were spread across Cleveland with 38% from Stockton, 24% from Hartlepool, 21% from Redcar and Cleveland and 17% from Middlesbrough.

Previous engagement with the female trans community had suggested that this sector of the community felt particularly vulnerable therefore respondents were asked to identify if they were trans. Only 6 respondents stated that they did identify as trans.

The majority of respondents (96.5%) identified as White British. There were a small number of responses from other ethnic groups.

Almost 10% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability.

Responses were spread across the age groups, with almost two thirds (26.57%) in the 25 to 54 age range. In terms of engagement with young women and girls there were 50 responses from under 18s and 153 responses in the 18 to 24 age category. The table below shows the age ranges in more detail:



Feelings of Safety

Respondents were asked how safe they felt in a variety of locations. Women were most likely to feel unsafe in town centres after dark – 47.6% stated that they felt very unsafe and 33.6% fairly unsafe. Feelings of safety in local neighbourhoods after dark were also pretty low – 17.2% very unsafe and 31.5% fairly unsafe.

Respondents felt much safer during the daytime, however almost 28% still stated that they felt unsafe in town centres during the day – 21.2% fairly unsafe and 6.6% very unsafe.

Although the scope of the funding is predominantly focused on public spaces the survey also asked about feelings of safety within the home. Almost 15% of respondents stated that they felt unsafe in their own home after dark. During daytime this percentage fell to just under 3.5%.

When asked to highlight particular areas where they felt unsafe many respondents mentioned town centre areas. Stockton town centre and Middlesbrough town centre were the most commonly mentioned locations, followed by Redcar town centre, Hartlepool and Billingham. Reasons for feeling unsafe in town centre locations were the prevalence of substance misusers and beggars. Many respondents also noted that men from different cultures could sometimes make them feel uncomfortable by openly staring at them.

In terms of particular streets that were frequently mentioned, these are listed below by Local Authority area:

- Middlesbrough – Parliament Road, Linthorpe Road, around Teesside University
- Stockton – Yarm Road, Hartington Road
- Redcar – Queen Street, seafront area
- Hartlepool – Oxford Road, Church Street, Victoria Road

In more residential areas gangs of young people hanging around shops was a key factor why people felt unsafe – this was particularly apparent in Ingleby Barwick. Other more residential areas mentioned as feeling particularly unsafe were Hemlington, North Ormesby, Berwick Hills, Pallister Park, Southbank, Eston, Grangetown, Burn Valley, Owton Manor and Rift House.

Parks were highlighted as a concern – Albert Park was the most frequently mentioned park, followed by Preston Park. Other parks mentioned were Summerhill, Stewarts Park, John Whitehead Park, Bishop Cuthbert Park and Laycock Park.

Many women stated that they felt unsafe whilst exercising, particularly in parks but also in general due to lewd comments received. Tees Barrage was frequently mentioned, perhaps due to recent incidents that have taken place in this area. Cycle paths were mentioned as a place women felt particularly at risk, often due to poor lighting. Many respondents also reported feeling unsafe walking their dog.

Lighting was a key factor in why women felt unsafe in locations – many respondents mentioned alleys, subways and back paths as areas they would actively avoid if possible. Overgrown shrubbery making visibility poor added to feelings of unsafety in these sorts of locations. Dim street lighting was also mentioned, particularly in Hartlepool.

Transport hubs were also mentioned as areas where women felt unsafe, specifically train stations and bus stops. Some respondents stated that they were wary of using certain taxi firms due to the way drivers spoke to and treated women. Car parks were also highlighted, especially multi storey car parks.

When asked what they based their feelings of safety on local news (75%), social media (69%) and national news (52%) were key influences however 47.5% of respondents stated that they based their opinions on personal experience or the experiences of friends and family.

Adult men were most likely to make women feel unsafe (81%) followed by groups of young people (75%) and younger men (64%).

Action Needed

Respondents were asked what they thought could be done to make women and girls feel safer.

Education was seen as key, both for young women so they understand what acceptable behaviour looks like, but also for young men so they understand how to treat women and girls properly, and also how to challenge inappropriate behaviour in their peers. The language used by organisations was also seen as really important in challenging stereotypes and negative perceptions and avoiding victim blaming:

“Cleveland police actually posted a great story on Facebook about Rachel Wilson I think recently and it was the first time I'd ever seen her described as a person who had a family and was loved rather than just describing her as a sex worker.”

More visible policing and council enforcement was also a popular response, together with increased and better street lighting and more CCTV. Several respondents stated that increased female officers and community safety staff would send a positive message. Faster response times when incidents were reported and more robust action against substance misusers and beggars was also suggested, together with appropriate support for these individuals. Dispersal of groups who are displaying intimidating behaviour was also supported.

More proactive door staff in the night time economy was also suggested – staff who intervened when they could see women and girls in uncomfortable situations, and also checking on lone females exiting premises. Several respondents mentioned the

irresponsible behaviour of door staff forcibly removing drunk lone females from premises and leaving them alone on the street.

Street angels were seen as having a key role within the night time economy in keeping people safe. Recognised safe places in town centres were also suggested, especially on a night, with facilities for people to be able to use a phone if they have lost their own phone.

Changes to the criminal justice system were also advocated, with tougher penalties for those who commit offences against women and greater enforcement for parents whose children show offending behaviour. Easier ways to report incidents was also suggested. It was also suggested that Cleveland Police start recording misogyny offences as hate crimes as several other police forces across the country are already doing.

Some respondents suggested self defence classes for women and also free attack alarms.

Increased opportunities for young people in the form of diversionary activities and employment possibilities was suggested.

Support for community groups which enable women and girls to undertake activities together which may make them feel unsafe if alone, such as running, cycling and dog walking.

Neighbourhood Watch groups were also seen as having an important role in keeping communities safe.

Experiences of Harassment

Respondents were asked about their experiences of harassment in Cleveland. The list below shows the percentage of respondents who had experienced each of the types of harassment mentioned:

- Wolf whistling (74.5%)
- Harassment from a former partner (31.5%)
- Upskirting (14%)
- Revenge porn (4.5%)
- Harassment from a current partner (4.5%)

Other forms of harassment mentioned were indecent exposure, sexualised and inappropriate comments, unwanted attention from drivers when out exercising, men refusing to leave women alone when on nights out.

When asked if they had told anyone about their experiences the most common responses were friends (68.5%) and family (55.5%). 10.5% had sought help from a support service. Only 19% had reported to the police. Some of the harassment experienced happened at victim's workplaces, schools or in night time economy locations, and some respondents reported that they had told teachers, work colleagues and door staff.

35.5% of respondents stated that they had experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault or rape in Cleveland. Only 12% had reported this to the police.

Those respondents who had reported to the police were asked to give details of their experience of reporting.

Positive experiences included good response times, sympathetic officers who took the victim seriously and good support for victims.

Negative experiences included long response times or in some cases no response at all, dismissive attitude of officers, victim being made to feel like they were to blame, lack of feedback, poor standard of investigation and overly complicated criminal justice process which can leave victims feeling re-victimised.

Whilst responses were split pretty equally between positive and negative several respondents mentioned that experiences of reporting recently were vastly improved to experiences in the past.

Those respondents who had not reported to the police were asked to give details of why they chose not to report.

Reasons given included feeling it wasn't serious enough to report, incidents happen so frequently they are just 'part of life' and no action could be taken anyway:

"Almost expected that as a woman these things happen"

Several respondents stated that they felt the police would not take the report seriously. The reputation of Cleveland Police was also mentioned as a barrier to reporting due to a lack of confidence that the report would be dealt with correctly. Previous negative experiences of reporting were also mentioned as a barrier to reporting further incidents:

"There is a historic lack of trust between women and the police. We are made to feel like our experiences are silly and unimportant."

Some respondents felt that reporting would only aggravate the issues.

Several victims stated that they didn't feel they could report as they felt it was their fault for putting themselves in a compromising situation. Others stated they felt embarrassed by what had happened.

Numerous respondents stated that incidents had happened some time ago when this sort of behaviour was deemed acceptable but if it happened to them now they would have the confidence to report.