

New public campaign on women's safety begins today

A new public campaign #RespectHerSpace was launched at the City Chambers in Edinburgh.

This approach was produced by The City of Edinburgh Council alongside partners, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian, the University of Edinburgh, and Edinburgh Napier University. It was also supported by the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership and the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee.

The launch follows two Women's Safety in Public Places consultations held between June 2022 and March 2023. The analysis of consultation responses found between 73.9% and 80.5% of women reported having experienced harassment, abuse, or violence while in a public space in Edinburgh.

Following extensive discussions with key campaign stakeholders, the 'her' pronoun was chosen for the campaign title to represent all women and girls.

It comes as evidence suggests that women and girls experience disproportionate levels of harassment in public places compared with men. This restricts their ability to freely participate in school, work, and public life due to concerns for personal safety, directly impacting their health and wellbeing.

The consultations detailed key recommendations to tackle this inequity, including a campaign targeted at men to address their behaviours and attitudes towards women in public places.

The campaign will not target criminality, but instead encourage men to make small changes to their behaviour to make people, especially women and girls, feel safer in Edinburgh.

Small changes, such as crossing the road instead of walking directly behind someone or making a phone call, are intended to reassure women and girls who may otherwise feel unsafe while in a public place. The campaign will be positive and will not alienate or blame men, rather it'll encourage men to reflect on their behaviour.

This campaign is part of a wider body of work committed to enhancing safety in the Capital. Key examples of these include £500,000 of funding for parks and open space lighting and a new state of the art City Operations Centre with an enhanced focus on CCTV and public safety and security.

The #RespectHerSpace campaign runs from 20 November 2023 for at least three weeks and will be seen across television, digital, and outdoor advertising.

Depute Council Leader, Cllr Mandy Watt said: "It's so important that everyone feels safe whilst out and about in Edinburgh. Women and girls are often excluded from full and meaningful inclusion in public spaces due to worries about their safety, but men can be fundamental in changing this. We are asking men to make small but significant changes to their behaviour to make sure women and girls feel safe when accessing our public spaces.

"I'd encourage people to engage with this campaign and use it as an opportunity to have these important conversations with male family members, friends, and colleagues.

"We're committed to making Edinburgh as safe, secure, and inclusive city as possible. Alongside our wider work, this campaign represents an important step in this process."

DCI Adam Brown of Edinburgh's Public Protection unit welcomed

the campaign. He said: "Improving the wellbeing of our communities is a key purpose of policing and I fully support this campaign, which demonstrates that small and considerate changes in our behaviour can make a difference in promoting feelings of safety and helping everybody to enjoy use of our public spaces equally."

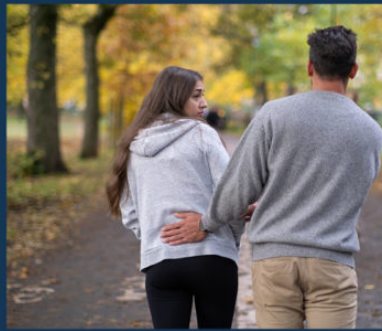
Dona Milne, Director of Public Health, NHS Lothian, said: "NHS Lothian welcomes the #RespectHerSpace campaign. Research clearly demonstrates the issues faced by women and girls who report negative experiences whilst in a public space. These experiences can cause anxiety and distress, which contributes to poorer health and wellbeing.

"Increasing awareness of these issues, and of the small changes that can make a big difference, is a powerful tool towards enabling women and girls to feel safer when they are in public spaces across our city. Everyone has a right to feel safe and we would encourage people to engage with this campaign and take action to support women and girls to achieve that right."

Carolann Begbie, Director of People & Services at Edinburgh Napier University said: "We strive to make Edinburgh Napier a safe place for everyone, and this campaign underlines that effort.

"Sadly, harassment and gender-based violence are problems which affect all aspects of society. We want to ensure that it's not a part of university life.

"#RespectHerSpace demonstrates that small changes can have a significant impact on helping our city become a more inclusive place to study, work and live."



#RespectHerSpace

