

SAFER PARKS

Improving access for
women and girls

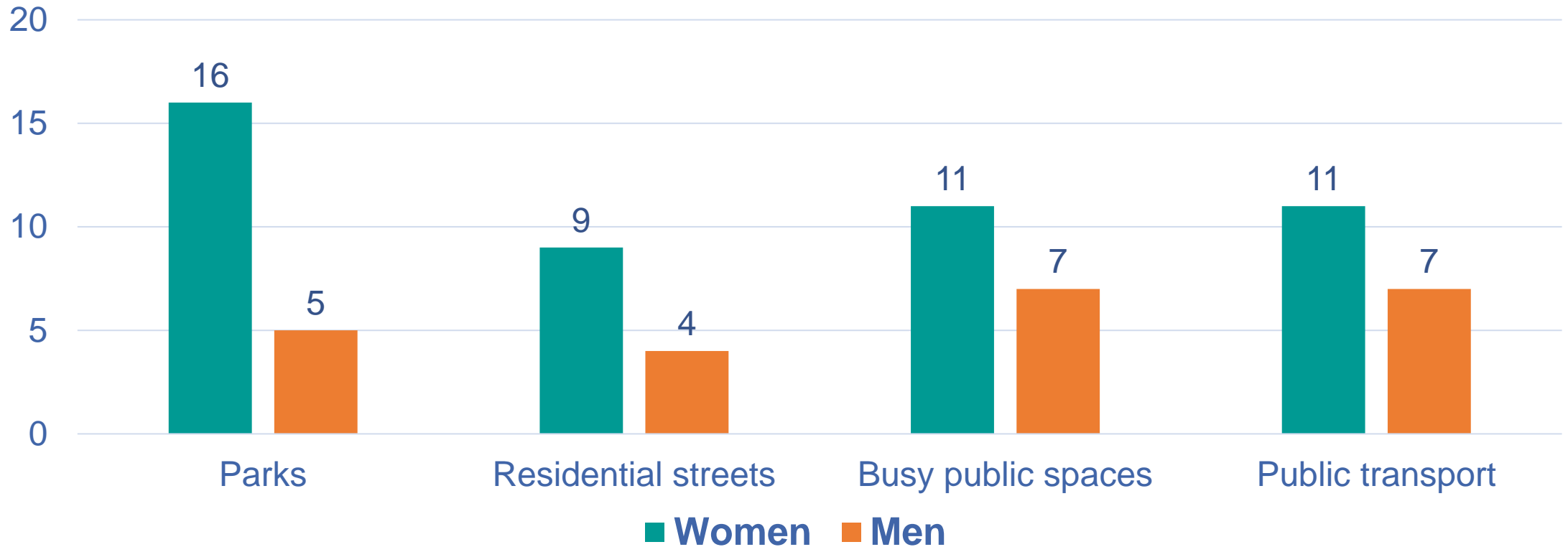


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What's the problem?

4 of 5 women feel unsafe after dark in Britain's parks compared to 2 of 5 men

Proportion (%) of women and men who felt **'very or fairly unsafe'** walking alone by public setting during the day, Great Britain



(Office for National Statistics, 2022)



This has a significant impact on women and girls.



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

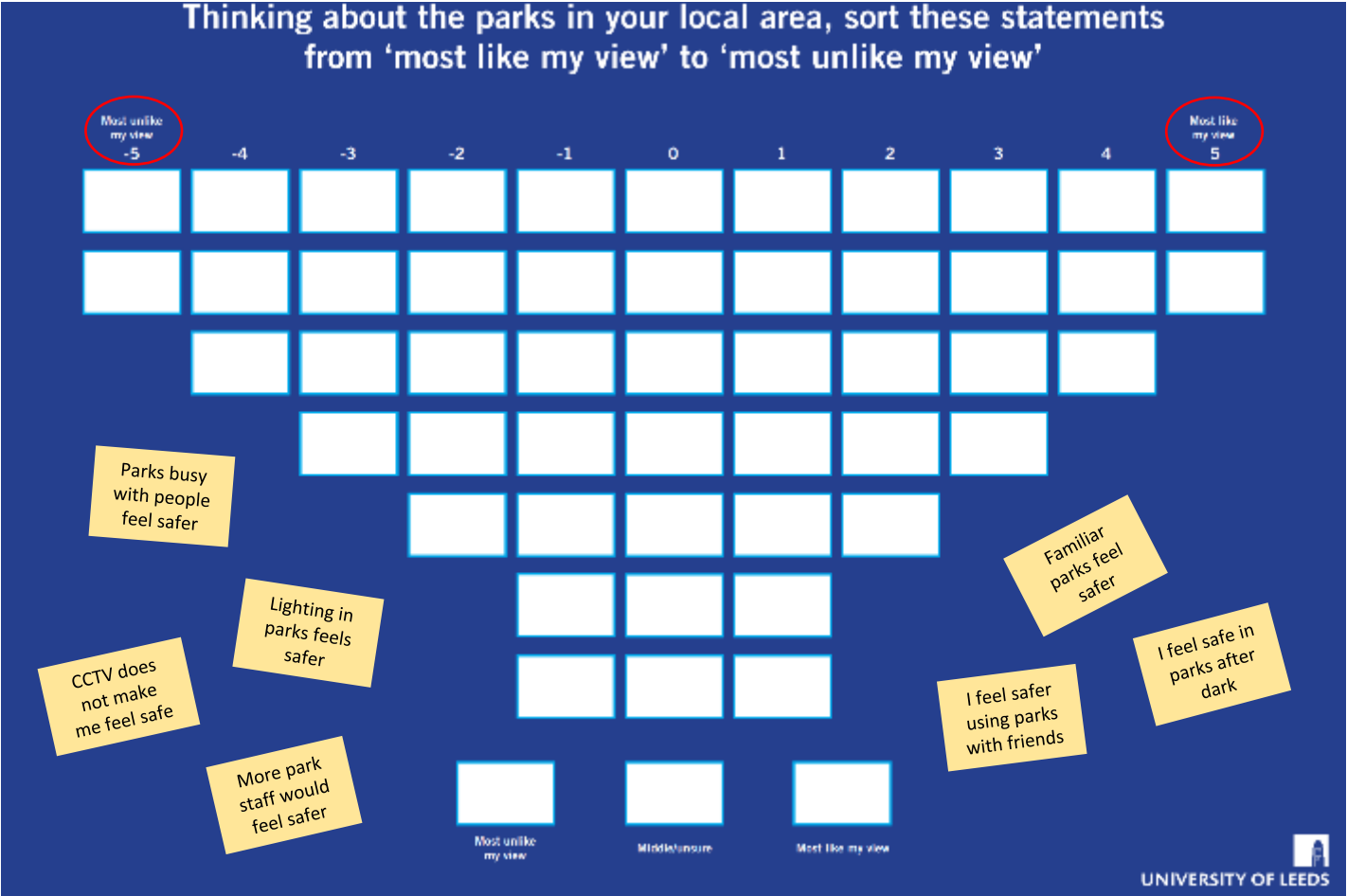
Tracy Brabin
Mayor
of West Yorkshire

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

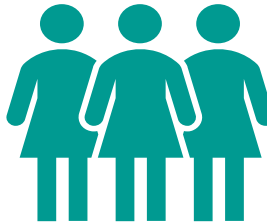
Women, girls and professionals ranked 49 statements according to their own views.



Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 2



Viewpoint 3

The presence of other women signal a safe park...

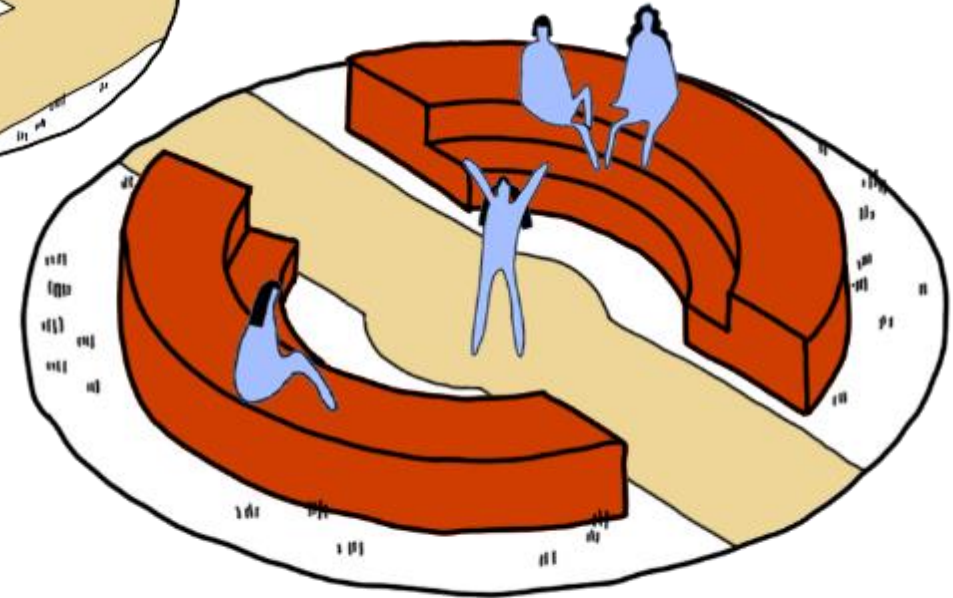
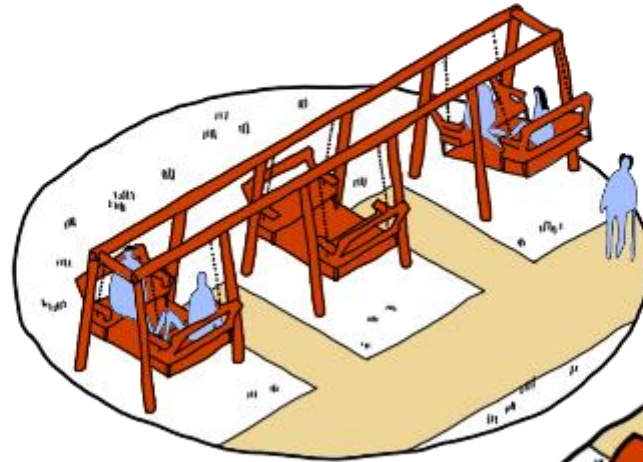
‘Having other women and girls there, especially on their own, it makes you feel a lot better.’



‘... you get a lot of Asian women walking around this particular park. I think it's because there are **other women** doing the same.’

Parks should be better designed to meet women and girls' diverse needs and interests

'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.'



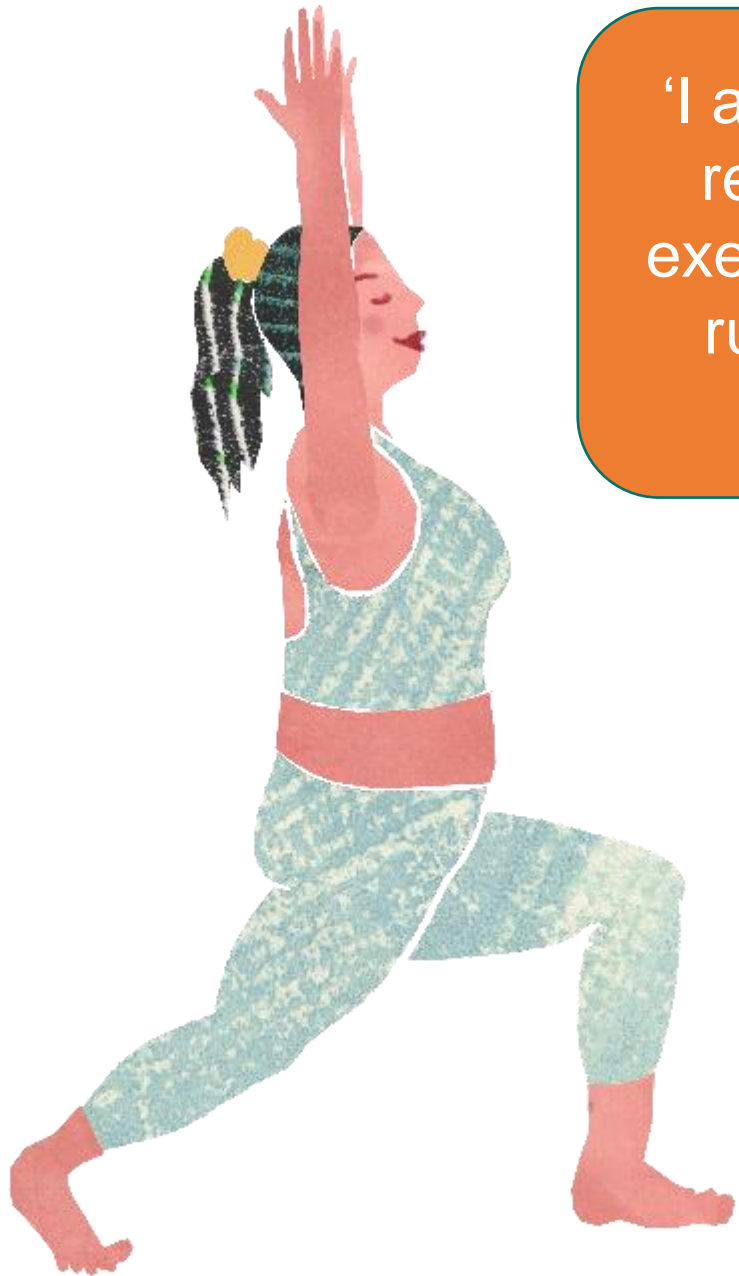
Well-used parks feel safer



Image credit: University of Leeds

‘I will walk the dog while parkrun’s going on because... there’s lots of people I could ask for **help** if I needed.’





‘I am part of **organised groups**, and it is a really good way for me to still get out, to exercise, to be social, but it’s **safe**... But me running round the park on my own, less safe.’

**Organised activities feel safer
and extend women’s use of parks**

Engage women and girls in the design of parks

(e.g., visibility, lighting, escape, wayfinding, natural surveillance)



‘If parks were designed with women, you would see **better lighting**, you would see **signs**, you would see more **patrolling...**’



‘A **groundsman** was just busy doing his thing and it was just a really **quick interaction** and off he went, but it would make me feel safe to run around the park again.’



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

Ways of getting help in parks matters to women and girls
(e.g., staffing, active bystanders, help points, noticeboards)



Remove the burden on women and girls to stay safe and create wider societal change

'I don't want to be tracked and followed in order to feel safe, so no [mobile phone safety apps] not for me.'



'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...'



[#justdont](#)

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Executive Summary



Steering group



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



**West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**

Funding



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**

Consultation

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



Historic
England



Landscape
Institute
Inspiring great places



tcpa

LIGHT
FOLLOWS
BEHAVIOUR



Future Parks
Accelerator

LONDON LEGACY
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

Themes

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

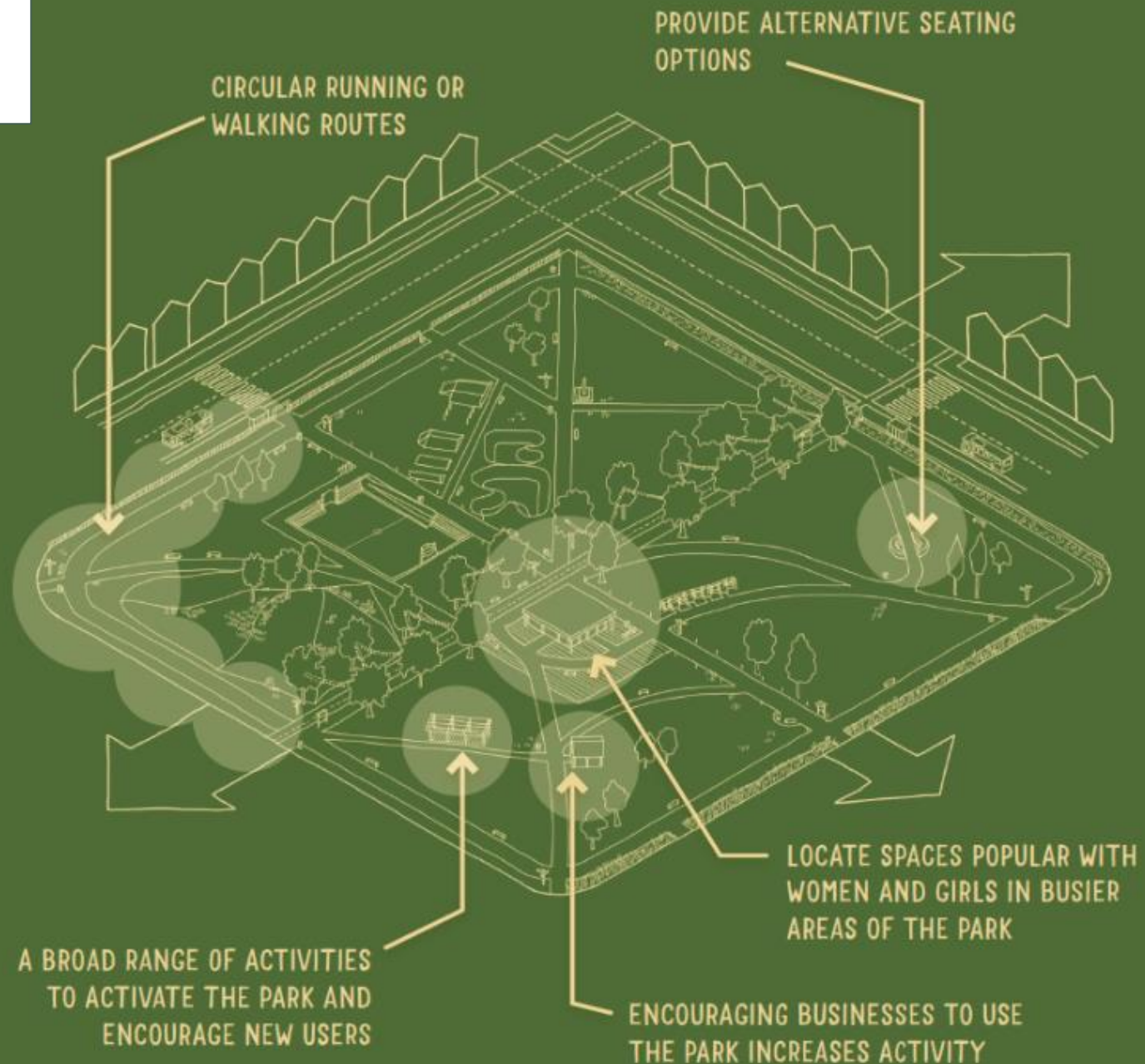
Facilities
Seating
Active Travel

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.

”



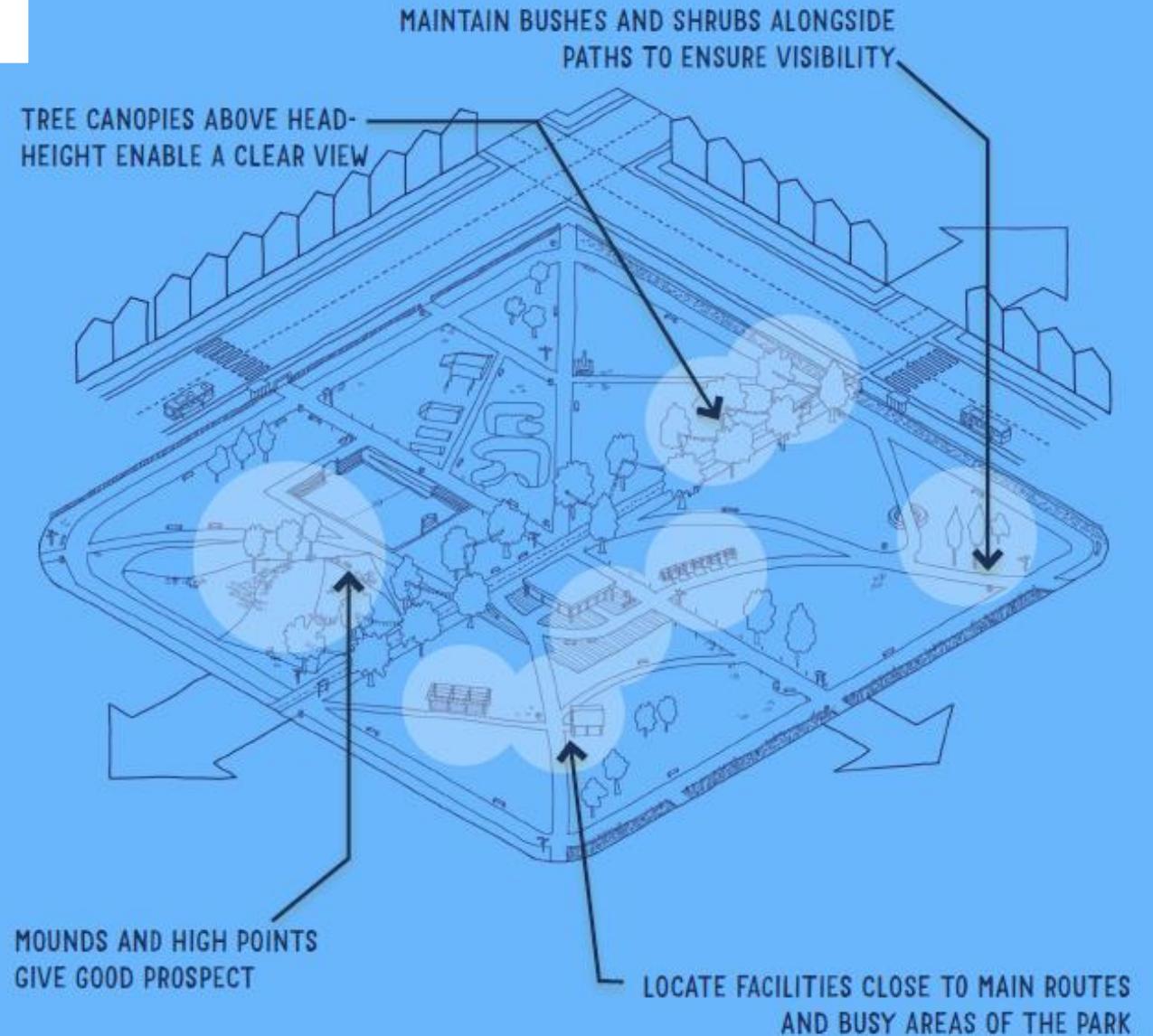
Visibility and Openness

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.

”



Belonging and Familiarity

Indicating belonging
Inclusion for everyone
Toilets

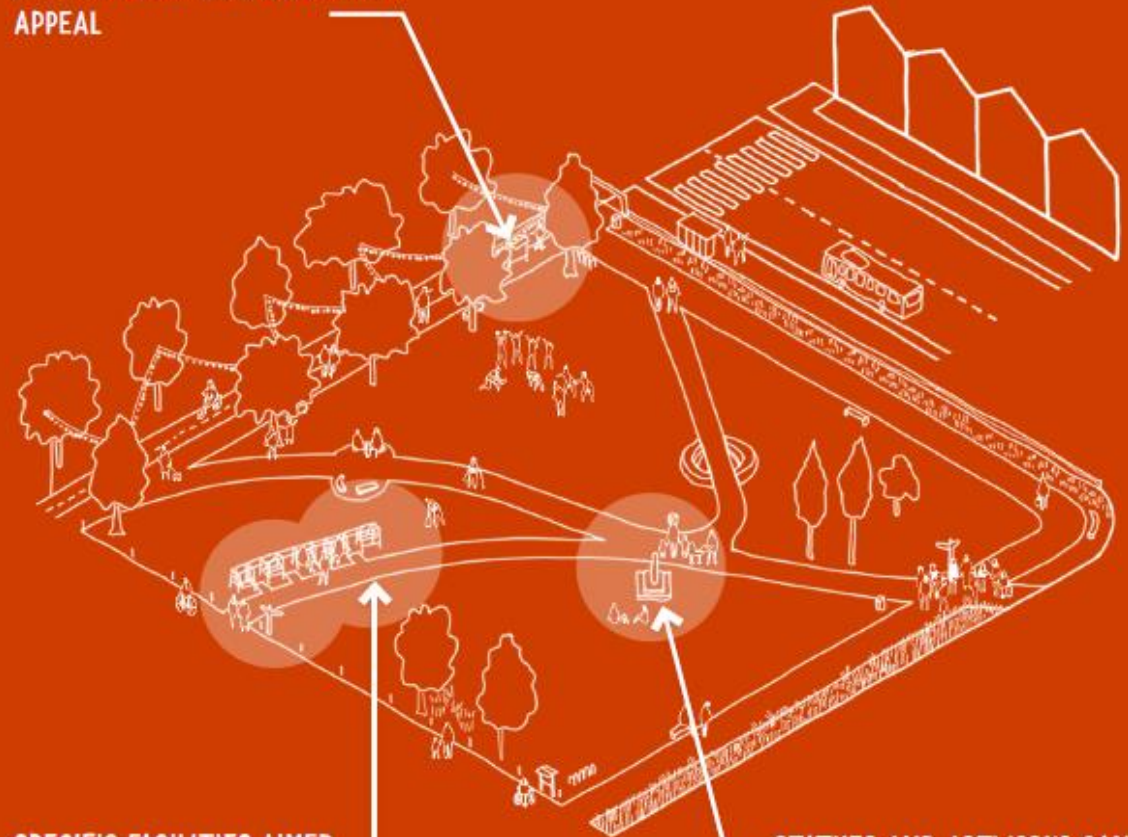
Familiarity and design

“

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.

”

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

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





Image credit: LDA Design

Burgess Park in South London redesigned its exits so that they were clearly signposted and visible, but also wider, allowing potential users to see a good distance into the park before they enter.

WAKEFIELD: BRINGING WOMEN INTO THE PARK



Facilitated events can help parks feel more familiar
Credit: Sport England

Quick wins

- Mow sub-spaces into grass so that different groups can use it at the same time.
- Clean existing signs and check they are correct.
- Display a map of the park at entrances and central points.
- Add walking times to signage.
- Engage with your local Sustrans or Active Travel officer.

Quick Wins

Quick Wins

- Ensure every local park has its own web page with details of facilities, accessibility, public transport etc.
- Review all communications to ensure they are inclusive.

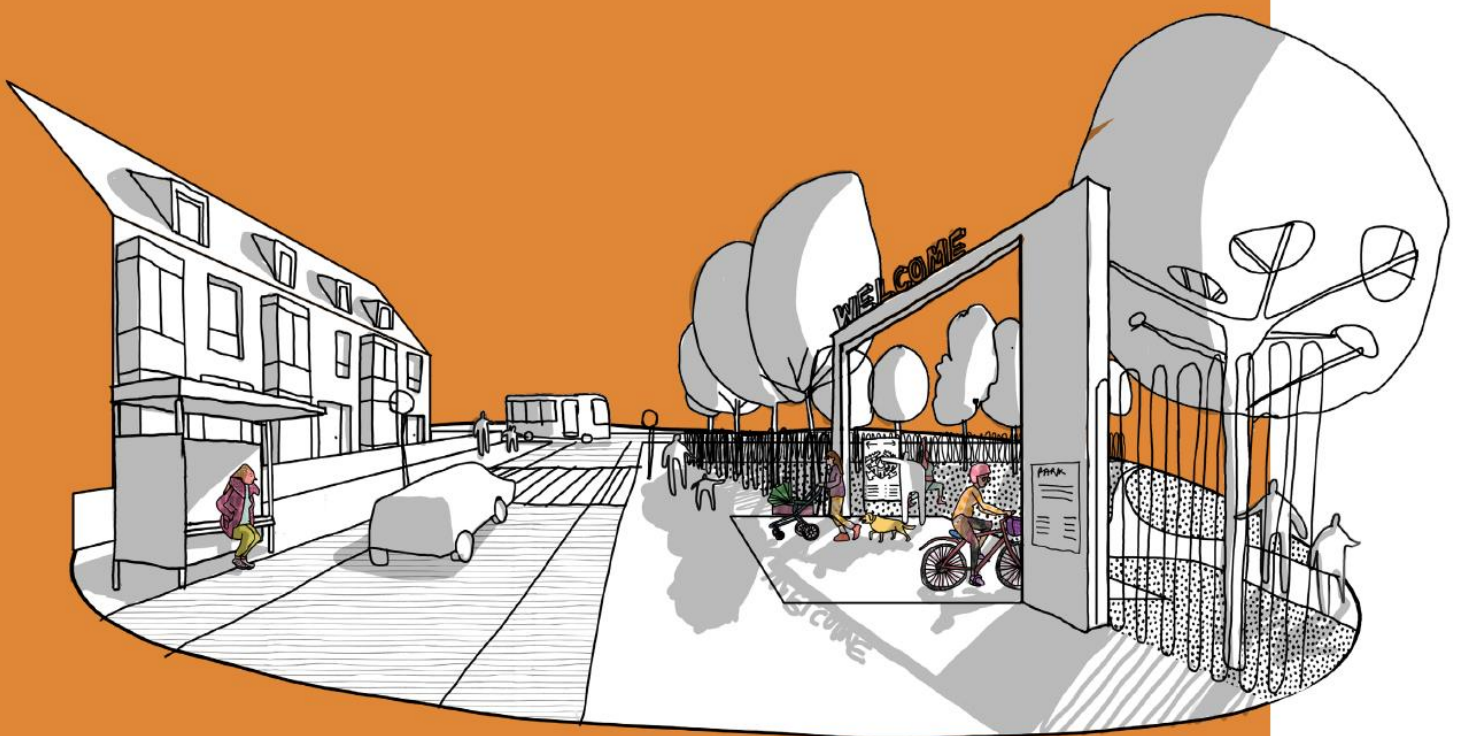


Next steps



- **Share the guidance**
- **Pilot guidance in WY park/s**
- **Bystander training**

- **Behaviour change campaign**



Parks & Green Spaces

Resources Hub

www.greenflagaward.org



"It's about being
SAFE
on my
OWN ...I am
independent,