



# BASILDON'S WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER

2024



BasildonCouncil



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# FOREWORD

## **Gavin Callaghan - The Leader of Basildon Borough Council**

As Leader of Basildon Borough Council, I am proud to see our community come together in support of the Women's Safety Charter. Violence against women and girls is a tragic reality that shatters lives, and it has no place in Basildon. Our commitment to creating a safer borough isn't just about policy – it's about standing with those affected, understanding their experiences, and creating spaces that foster healing and protection.

The Women's Safety Charter is a powerful step forward, and it reflects our shared responsibility to ensure that every woman and girl feels safe in our borough. Whether you are a business owner, a stakeholder, a resident, or simply passing through, we need your commitment to help drive a fundamental change in culture. Together, we can make Basildon a borough where women feel secure and supported.

To everyone who has been part of this vital work – thank you. Your dedication is bringing to life the values of this charter, creating spaces of respect and safety for our women and girls.

I want us to keep building on this momentum, making Basildon a place where women feel safe and where safety is something they can rely on – not a privilege, but a right.

## **Councillor Joseph, Lead for Violence against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse.**

We recently attended the launch of the Women's Safety Charter with our local businesses and were heartened by the commitment and compassion of everyone involved. This isn't just a project for this Administration; it's a cause we care deeply about. It's heartbreaking to know that 88% of women feel unsafe after dark in our towns and public spaces – a reality that the Council is determined to change.

Every woman in Basildon deserves to feel safe, day or night. No one should have to endure the distress of catcalling, staring, or other intimidating behaviours. Through this charter, we're taking direct action to address these concerns by focusing on training, improving public spaces, and fostering supportive behaviours that create a true sense of safety.

The journey to change is collective – it requires each of us to listen, to understand, and to act. We are proud to be part of a borough that values the safety of its women and girls and is uniting to make our vision a reality. We invite everyone to join us in standing against behaviours that threaten safety and championing respect and security for all.





# INTRODUCTION

It is a sad fact that, in 2024, women still do not feel safe when accessing or using public spaces. In the last few years, we have seen some horrific headlines about violence against women and girls (VAWG).

*The National Police Chief's Council reported that "between October 2021 and March 2022, over 507,827 VAWG crimes were recorded, amounting to 16 per cent of all crime over that period"*

*When it comes to perceptions of personal safety, the latest Office for National Statistics survey, found that almost three times as many women feel "a bit" or "very" unsafe after dark (31% of women compared to 13% of men) in public spaces.*

VAWG is an umbrella term used to cover a wide range of abuse types that disproportionately affect more women and girls than men and boys. These crimes can be committed in the real world and online.

Women and girls face much higher levels of sexual violence than the rest of society and, sadly, our towns and cities in Essex are not immune to this reality, with some deeply appalling atrocities against women taking place over recent years.



These incidents understandably affect and stay with women, lingering far longer than the headlines, causing a deep-rooted and systemic fear, even when not victims or survivors themselves.





# INTRODUCTION

In a recent survey by Essex County Council, almost half of women reported feeling unsafe at night. This was reflected in a local survey with 86% feeling unsafe at night. But it's not just after dark when women feel susceptible to gendered violence.



Women's everyday experience is marred by having to change their behaviours to reduce the likelihood of experiencing some kind of harassment, assault or worse. From choosing a different route home, taking public transport rather than walking, always staying in groups, women are continuously and consciously considering and assessing their safety in a way that men generally don't. And we don't think this is right.

Women and girls should feel safe wherever they are, whatever the time of day, which is why we have developed Basildon's Women Safety Charter to improve experiences for women and girls in our borough.

*Data from Essex Police demonstrates that, where gender is detailed, over half of victims of Violence Against the Person (VAP) offences identified as female (56.3%). From 2022-2023, there were 47,362 VAP offences committed against women and girls.*





# WOMEN'S SAFETY AS A PRIORITY

The Safer Basildon Partnership works hard to ensure the borough is a safe place for people to live, work, and visit.

The partnership believes that women's safety must be prioritised and, last year, continued to focus its efforts on tackling violence against women and girls following a successful bid to the Home Office Safer Streets fund.

We are dedicated to improving women's and girls' feelings and perceptions of safety in our town, as well as embedding positive cultural change within communities, organisations and businesses. As we believe that violence against women and girls is everyone's responsibility.

The real, lived experiences of women and girls have shaped our Women's Safety Charter, with research conducted in partnership with Karen Whybro Consultants to gather the views and experiences of residents and those who work and visit the borough.

This research sadly indicated that safety is a concern for everyone, but women feel disproportionately at risk of experiencing harm in every walk of life, during the day as well as at night.

“

*“I was recently walking to the train station in broad daylight when a car drove past me about 3 times. It eventually pulled into a turning that I was walking towards. As I approached a bloke called out of the window ‘hello darling, do you fancy doing something’ I was going to meet my boyfriend. It upset me and shook me up. I’m 58, if he does that to me what would he do to a younger person?”*

”





# BASILDON'S WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER

The Safer Basildon Partnership works hard to ensure our borough is a safe place for visitors and residents to enjoy.

We also recognise that particular groups of people have specific concerns and needs, and as the research has indicated, women and girls disproportionately feel unsafe in public spaces in our town. We do not feel this is acceptable.



To year ending September 2024, there were 3,999 violence against women and girls (VAWG) police recorded crimes in Basildon. Of these, 1,952 took place in public spaces. Police data shows that these types of offences have decreased from 2023, however, it must always be noted that recorded police data only presents incidents reported to police.

“

***SAFETY IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF THREAT - IT IS A PRESENCE OF CONNECTION***

”

Gabor Maté





# BASILDON'S WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER

**As part of our commitment to improve the experiences of women in our borough, Safer Basildon and Women's Safety Consultant, Karen Whybro, have created a Women's Safety Charter which brings together members of our community to create and deliver Safe Spaces, with trained staff members who cultivate a safe and protective environment for all.**



Local businesses and organisations pledge to prioritise women's safety by ensuring their space is a safe, respectful, and inclusive place to be.

Signing up to the Charter includes pledging their commitment to a range of tasks, training and continued professional development which ensures staff and members prioritise women's safety as a standard.

In addition, the Charter calls on all members of our community to consider their attitudes and behaviours to become a more positive place for women and girls.

We believe that everybody has a role to play in creating and sustaining a respectful and inclusive culture for all. Through our media campaign we will continue to challenge and call out misogynistic behaviour, as it has no place in our borough.

Basildon is already a progressive multi-cultural borough, and we want to further build on this by continuing to advocate for women's safety.







# THE SUPPORTING CAMPAIGN MESSAGE

## WHAT PART DO YOU PLAY?

We believe that every individual can play their part in making our community safer. It is our responsibility to keep ourselves safe but also to help sustain a culture where safety is a protected right for all.

Our consultations have highlighted that women do not feel safe on our streets, and we are calling on every member of our community to improve their experience through challenging current beliefs and behaviours, promoting women's issues, and offering a place of support for those who need support.



*A 2023 YouGov survey has found that over three-quarters of UK adults think improved safety procedures in bars, pubs and nightclubs is necessary in the wake of high-profile cases of violence against women and girls.*

*Similarly, a survey by Budweiser in the same year found that 53% of women would be more inclined to visit a venue that has anti-harassment and discrimination policies, compared to men (35%).*





# SIGNING UP TO THE CHARTER

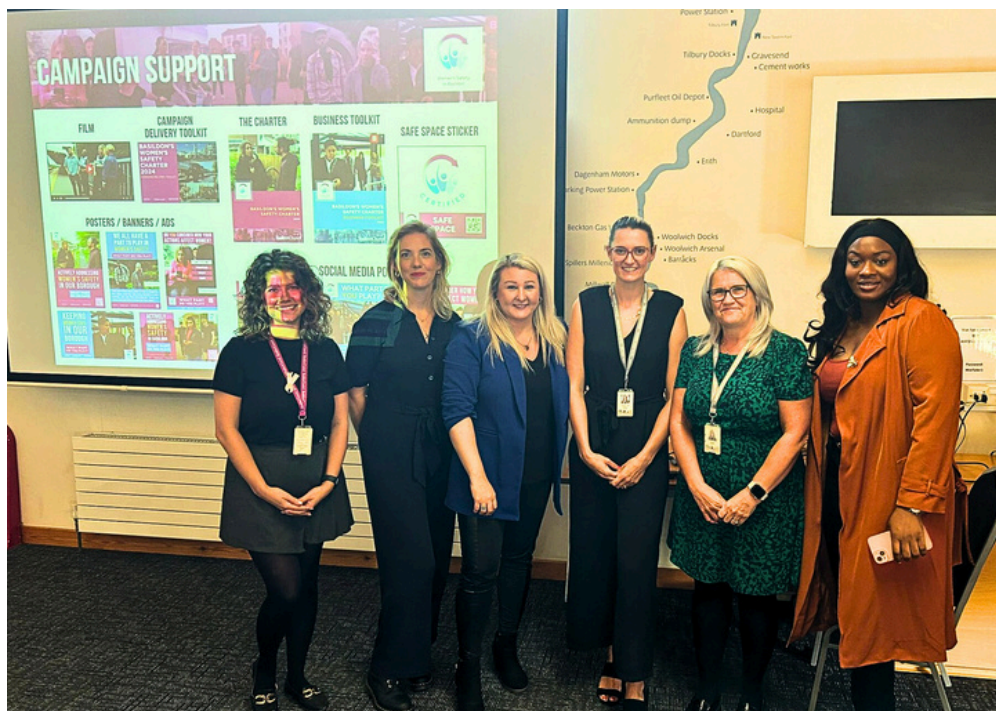
Whether you're a business owner, manager of a team, community leader or member of any organisation in Basildon, you have a role to play in ensuring our borough is a safe and welcoming place. Being an advocate for women means ensuring an ethos is upheld that is committed to prioritising their safety.

Organisations signing up to the Charter will allocate a member of staff who leads on its aims but every person in that organisation must also be committed to being active guardians of the culture that centres women's experiences.

Every business or organisation who signs up to the Women's Safety Charter will benefit from a range of support to positively impact your space and the experience of everyone using it.



We will provide training for your team, guidance, support and a bank of resources for you to use to help create and sustain a positive culture for women throughout your space and your team. We will train your team on how to create a safe space for women, how to introduce and implement gender equality policies and practices and embed positive culture to ensure the Charter is effective in the long term.





# THE CHARTER'S PLEDGE

Being part of Basildon's Women's Safety Charter requires a commitment from each business or organisation to make a pledge.

The pledge forms the actions an organisation must take to be considered a "Safe Space". This involves committing to staff culture training, considering physical changes to your space and utilising our bank of resources to ensure your intentions towards making a safe space for women is prominent and clear.

**Organisations are required to make 5 pledges, as follows to verify their space as safe for women:**

1

Allocate a nominated Charter Leader



2

Train staff members to become "custodians of culture"



3

Clearly display media which sets expectations of behaviour, both physically and online



4

Signpost people who require support to the best source of help



5

Consider making changes to physical space to promote safety



All resources, training and information on signposting will be provided by Safer Basildon and Karen Whybro, Women's Safety Consultant.





# TOOLKIT, REPORTING & REVIEWING

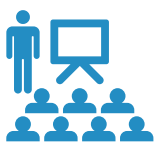
Every organisation committing to the Basildon's Women's Safety Charter is provided with a package of resources and guidance to ensure that they are supported from signing up through to reviewing the impact of their safe space on women's experiences long-term.



Online bank of physical and digital media resources



Audit for staff and visitors to identify what can be improved and what is working in your space



Training for staff and members in creating a positive culture



Resources for implementing positive change in the physical space and working policy and practice

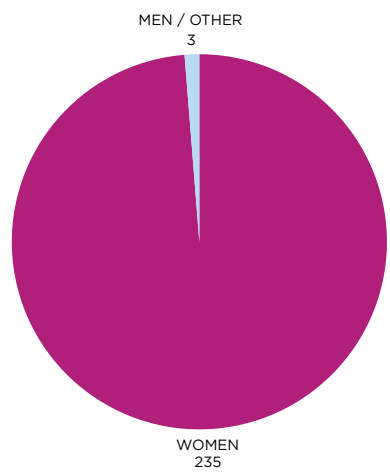


Support and information on organisations to signpost members/visitors to who may be in need

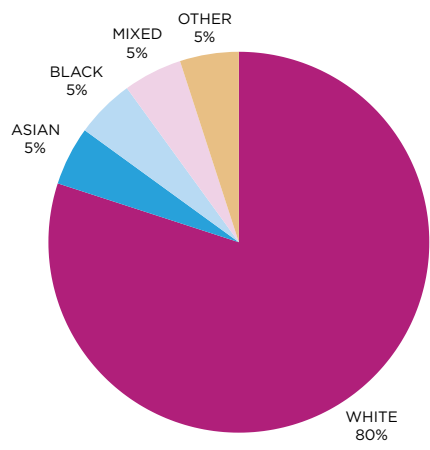


# LOCALISED SURVEY RESPONSES

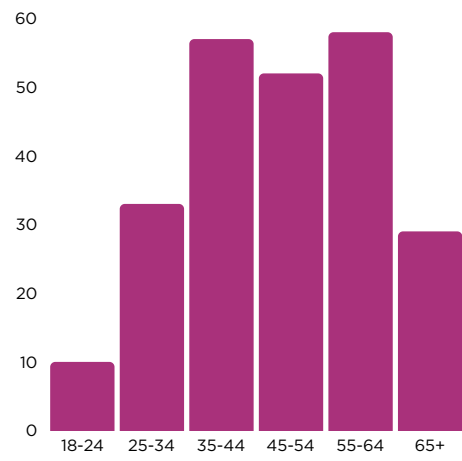
**238 RESPONDENTS**  
235 WOMEN  
3 MEN / OTHER



**ETHNICITY**  
80% WHITE  
5% ASIAN  
5% BLACK  
5% MIXED  
5% OTHER



**AGE DEMOGRAPHICS**  
18 -24  
25 - 34  
35 - 44  
55 - 64  
65+

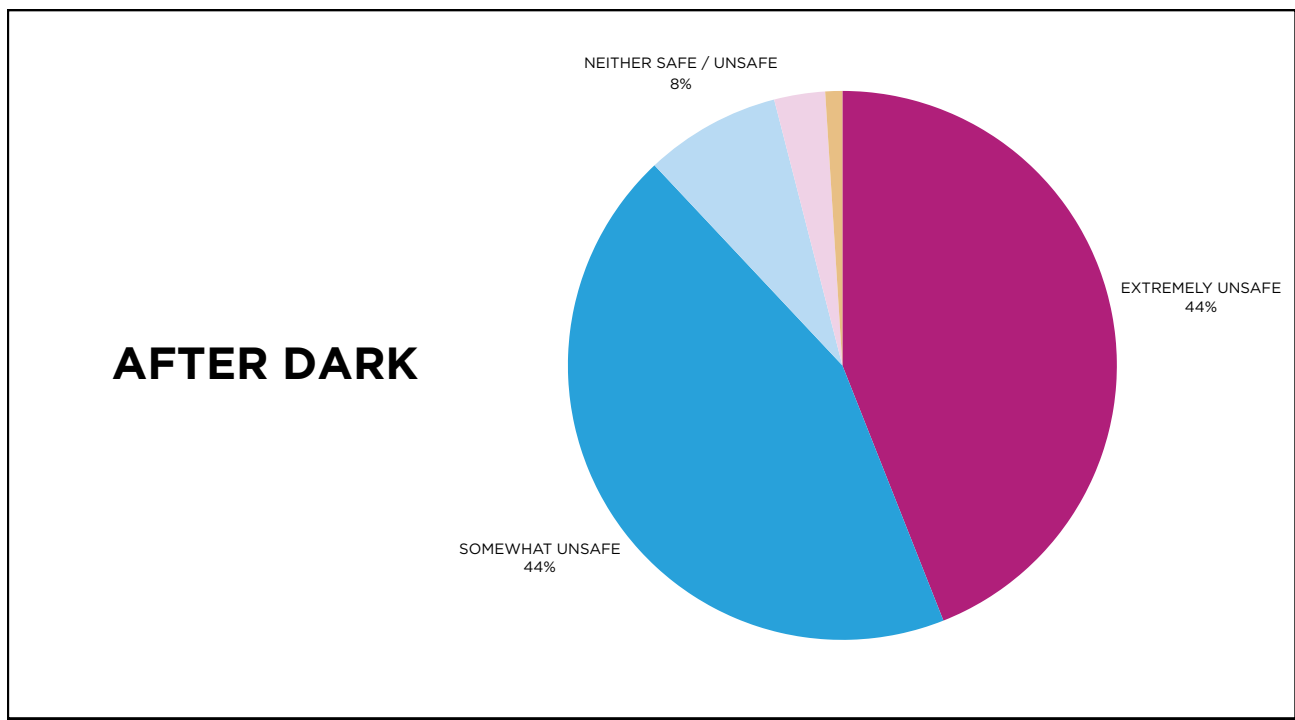
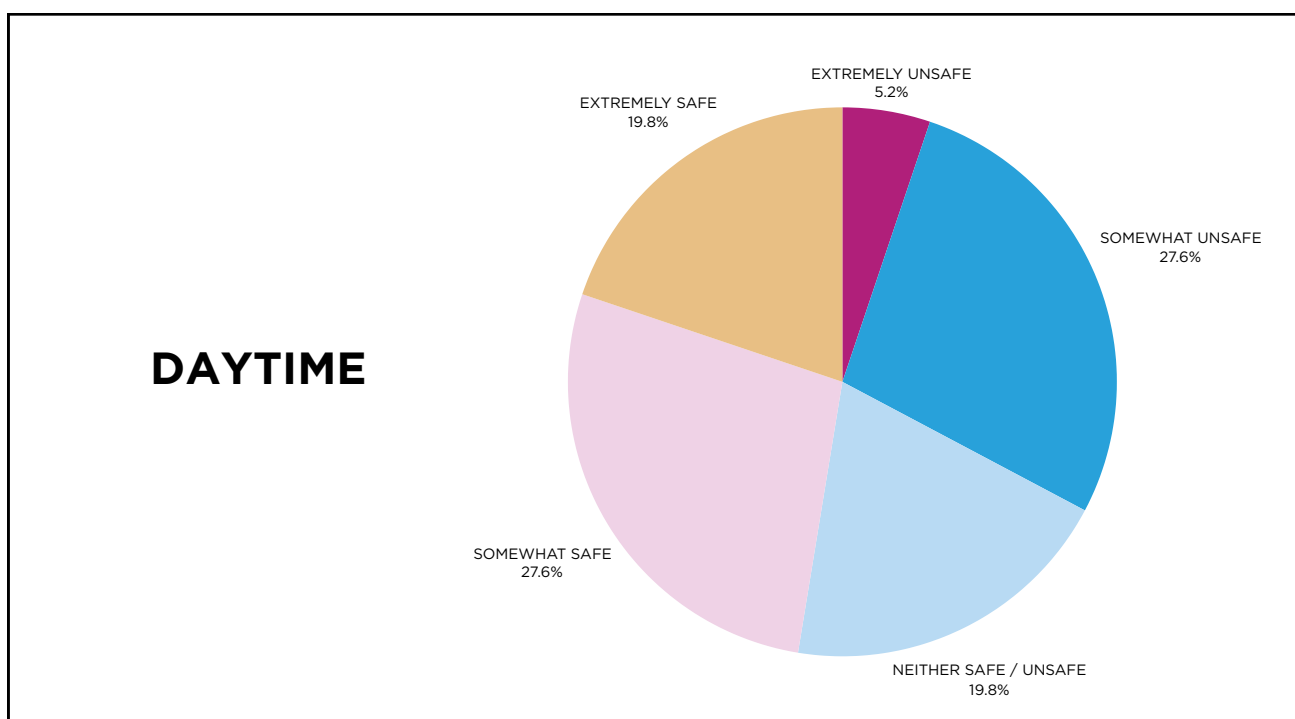






# LOCALISED SURVEY RESPONSES

## HOW SAFE DO WOMEN FEEL IN OUR BOROUGH?









# LOCALISED SURVEY RESPONSES

## SPECIFIC SPACES WOMEN FEEL UNSAFE IN BASILDON?







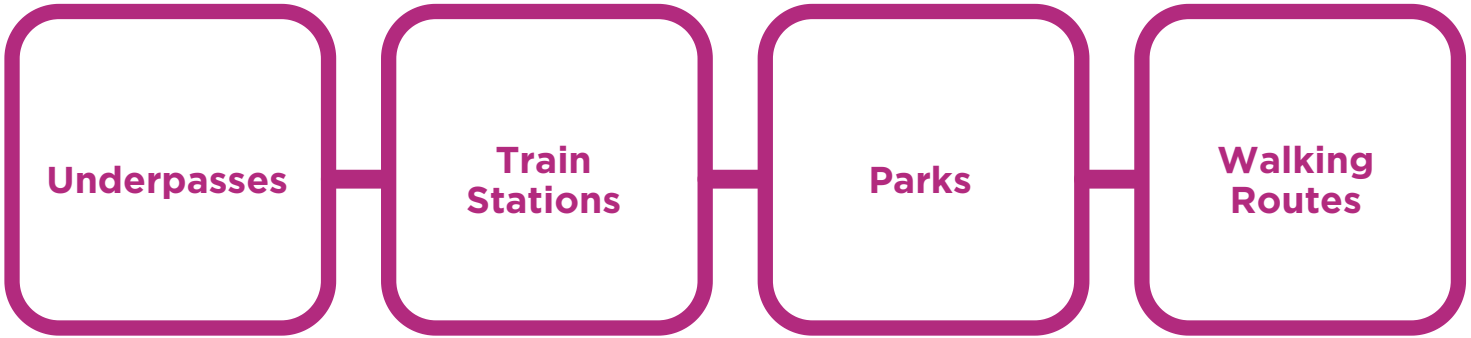




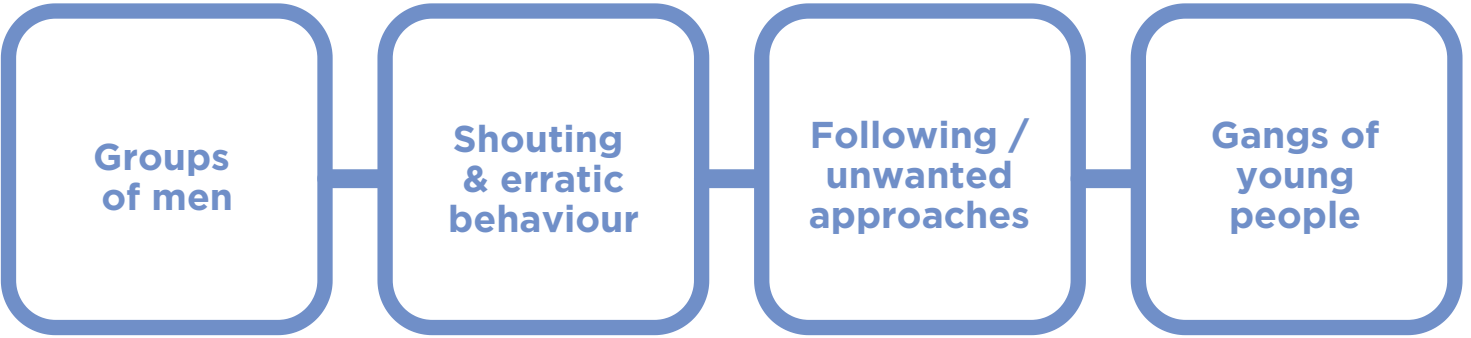
# FOCUS GROUPS

As a second phase of research, individual and focus group interviews were held with different demographics of women and girls to gain further insight into their feelings of safety and unsafety. These were the common themes that came from these groups.

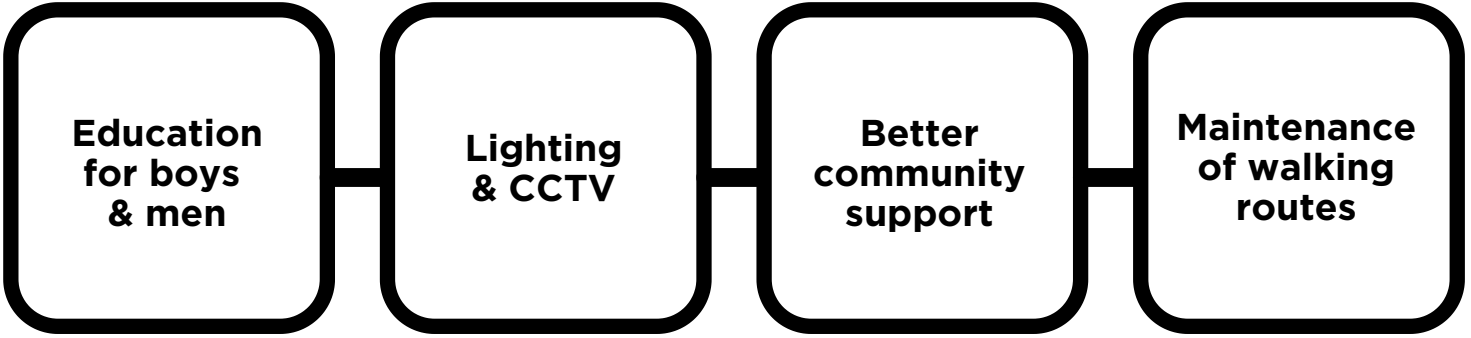
## PLACES WHERE WOMEN FEEL UNSAFE



## THINGS THAT MAKE WOMEN FEEL UNSAFE



## WHAT COULD BE DONE?







**BROUGHT TO YOU BY**



**BasildonCouncil**



**KAREN WHYBRO**  
WOMEN'S SAFETY CONSULTANT

Search for [The Safer Basildon Partnership](#) for more information.