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POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

SAFER PARKS STANDARD



Newcastle
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INTRODUCTION

This Standard is a set of principles for managing public park spaces in ways that prioritise women and girls' safety.

The Standard is informed by research conducted in early 2022 for Northumbria OPCC. This research took place across the Northumbria Police area, and involved an online survey, park observations, focus groups and a review of international literature.

Designing and managing parks for women's and girls' safety presents some unique issues, and requires a distinct approach.

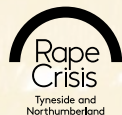
The Standard is designed on the basis of the following principles.

RESEARCH TEAM

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KEY PRINCIPLES

Parks offer significant benefits to health and wellbeing, but are not used equally, by all people.

Unsafety and fear in parks are greater for women and girls, and overlap with other issues of inequality. We need to consider safety for women and girls alongside racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and ageism.

Women's and girls' fears about using parks are not separate from their actual safety. Research shows that women and girls are at risk in parks, and many have experienced violence and abuse themselves.

The widely accepted idea that women and girls are responsible for reducing violence by avoiding parks, or by taking precautions, is not acceptable.

Changes to park spaces must acknowledge and address the structural causes of violence against women and girls, and hate crimes such as racist abuse, to be effective.

Environmental interventions in parks are not standalone solutions. Improvements to parks must reflect local problems of violence against women and girls and hate crimes.

Changes to parks should have a neutral, or positive, impact on nature and biodiversity – as these features of parks are highly valued by users (including women and girls).

All interventions must be made in consultation and participation with relevant users, and subject to continued monitoring with those groups.



A PARK THAT IS WELL USED IN ALL SEASONS, BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE

A programme of activities and social opportunities to encourage park use

Activities should be available in all seasons and at different times of the day, to maximise access.

Examples could include sports sessions, exercise classes, nature walks, park days, festivals and celebrations, managed community growing schemes and horticultural activities, performances.

Parks should be multi-use, and used to enhance the local economy, such as the provision of markets, buskers and street vendors

Visibility of park staff and wardens who are clearly associated with the management and maintenance of the park.

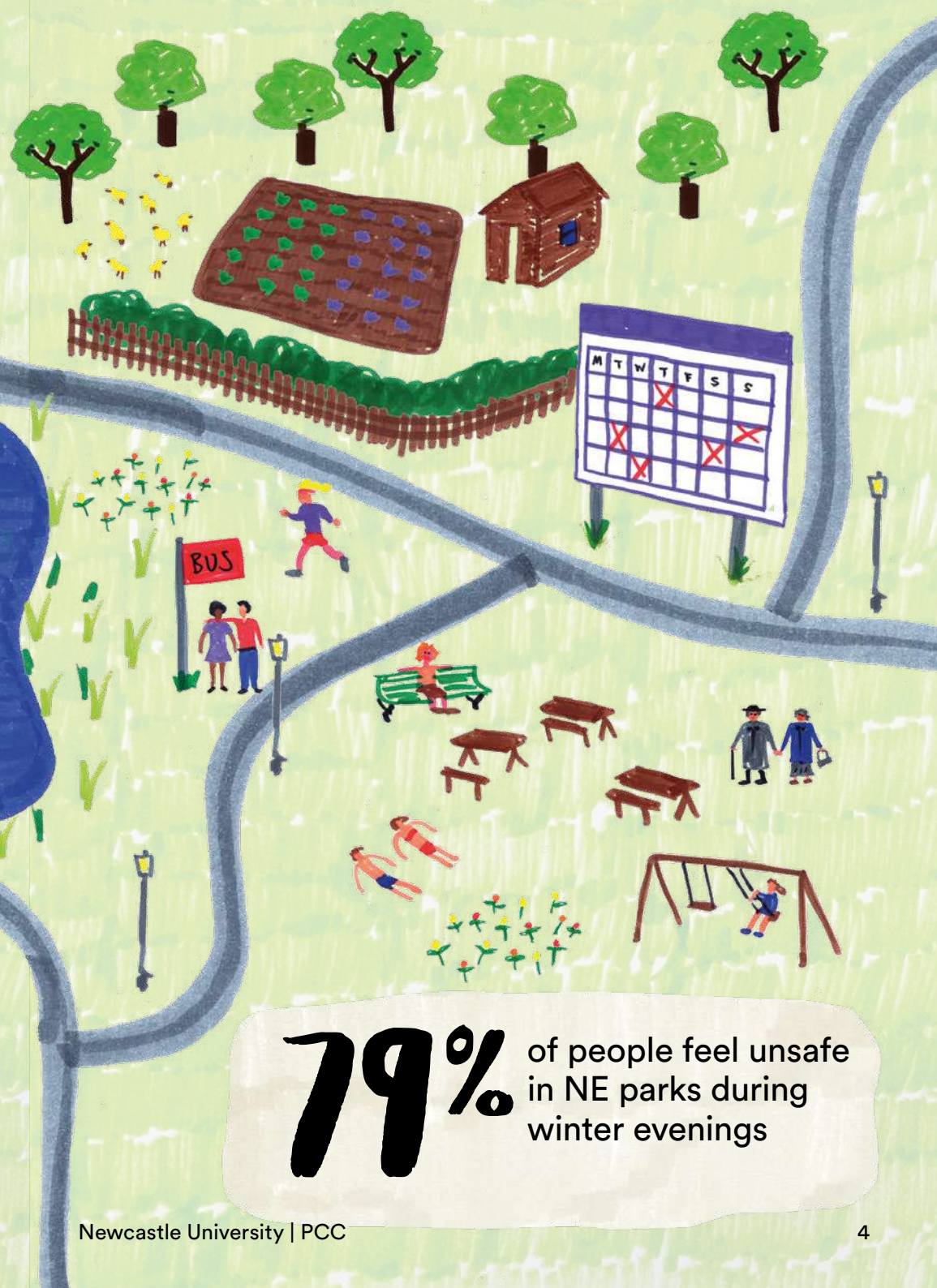
An increase in police presence may improve feelings of safety for some groups but not others.

Designated, accessible social areas and seating that consider the needs of different groups and promotes a diversity of park users

There should be a variety of social areas to accommodate different needs, for example, performance areas, sports areas and relaxation areas.

Examples include providing different styles of seating, such as hammocks and cut-out seating suitable for wheelchair user.

Infrastructure should consider the needs of paid and unpaid carers, of whom women make up the majority.



79% of people feel unsafe in NE parks during winter evenings

INFRASTRUCTURE BUILT WITH GIRLS IN MIND

Fun, accessible and sustainable infrastructure that makes girls feel welcome and included:

SMALLER ZONES WITHIN THE PARK SHOULD BE DEMARCATED TO DISCOURAGE THEM BEING OVERTAKEN BY THE MOST ASSERTIVE GROUP

PUBLIC ART CREATED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS, INCLUDING INTERACTIVE INSTALLATIONS

SUNLIT AND SHADED AREAS

Areas should provide privacy for young people, away from family areas. Examples include:

DISTINCT PLAY AREAS SUITABLE FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS AND TEENAGERS

PERFORMANCE SPACES FOR PLAYING MUSIC, SINGING AND DANCING

BRIGHT, FUN EXERCISE EQUIPMENT THAT IS SIMPLE AND SOCIAL TO USE



Active recreation facilities, sports programmes, natural features, and parks being well maintained and clean makes girls feel safer and more likely to use parks

USERS & PARK STAFF/ VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE EDUCATED & TRAINED IN RESPONDING TO HARASSMENT, ABUSE & HATE CRIME

Training and education that responds directly to emerging local problems and crime hotspots

- Training and education available for all park stakeholders, such as park users, local schools, park staff, police and community groups
- Training and education should be developed in consultation with local specialist organisations

Evidence-based campaign strategies and social messaging

- Behaviour change campaigns should target perpetrators of unacceptable behaviour in parks, rather than those at risk
- Bystanders in parks should feel empowered by campaigns and messaging to respond appropriately
- Encourage a sense of collective responsibility and care amongst the public for keeping safe women, girls, and others who are at high risk
- Avoid blaming, condemning, or threatening language

88%

said that visible staff in parks would be helpful



PLANNING THAT IS INCLUSIVE & PARTICIPATORY

The safety of women, girls and minoritised groups should be a central consideration in planning, developing and managing parks.

- Women, girls and minoritised groups should be included within the planning, design and development of parks, and compensated for their time. They should be kept up to date with plans and changes
- Changes to parks should be done in consultation with specialist organisations, such as the violence against women and girls sector and other key representatives of minoritised groups
- Plans for the development of parks and green spaces should fit into a longer-term strategy that is flexible to safety needs, and sustainable
- This should be an ongoing process that needs to be revised and reassessed periodically: this Standard should be an evolving document to reflect the changing landscape of the region and the needs of its dwellers

MINI CASE STUDY: Vienna

Vienna City Council is a widely cited example of gender mainstreaming (Stommvoll 2007). They partner local authorities, female architects and local women's groups to ensure the participation of women and inclusion of their interests throughout the planning process. (Dymén and Ceccato 2011).

Improvements include: wayfinding, signage, places offering good visibility and overview of the area, appropriate lighting, attractive environments, the presence of capable guardians, and easily maintained public spaces.



We must deliver participatory urban development from women and girls' perspectives

A PARK THAT IS WELL LIT AND RESPECTS NATURE



ENTRANCES, EXITS & MAIN PATHS ARE WELL LIT



DARK AREAS ARE SITED & PLANNED WITH CARE, TO RESPECT NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY, & MINIMISE FEAR



LIGHTING FOLLOWS GUIDELINES FROM SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE RHS & THE BAT CONSERVATION TRUST, TO MINIMISE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



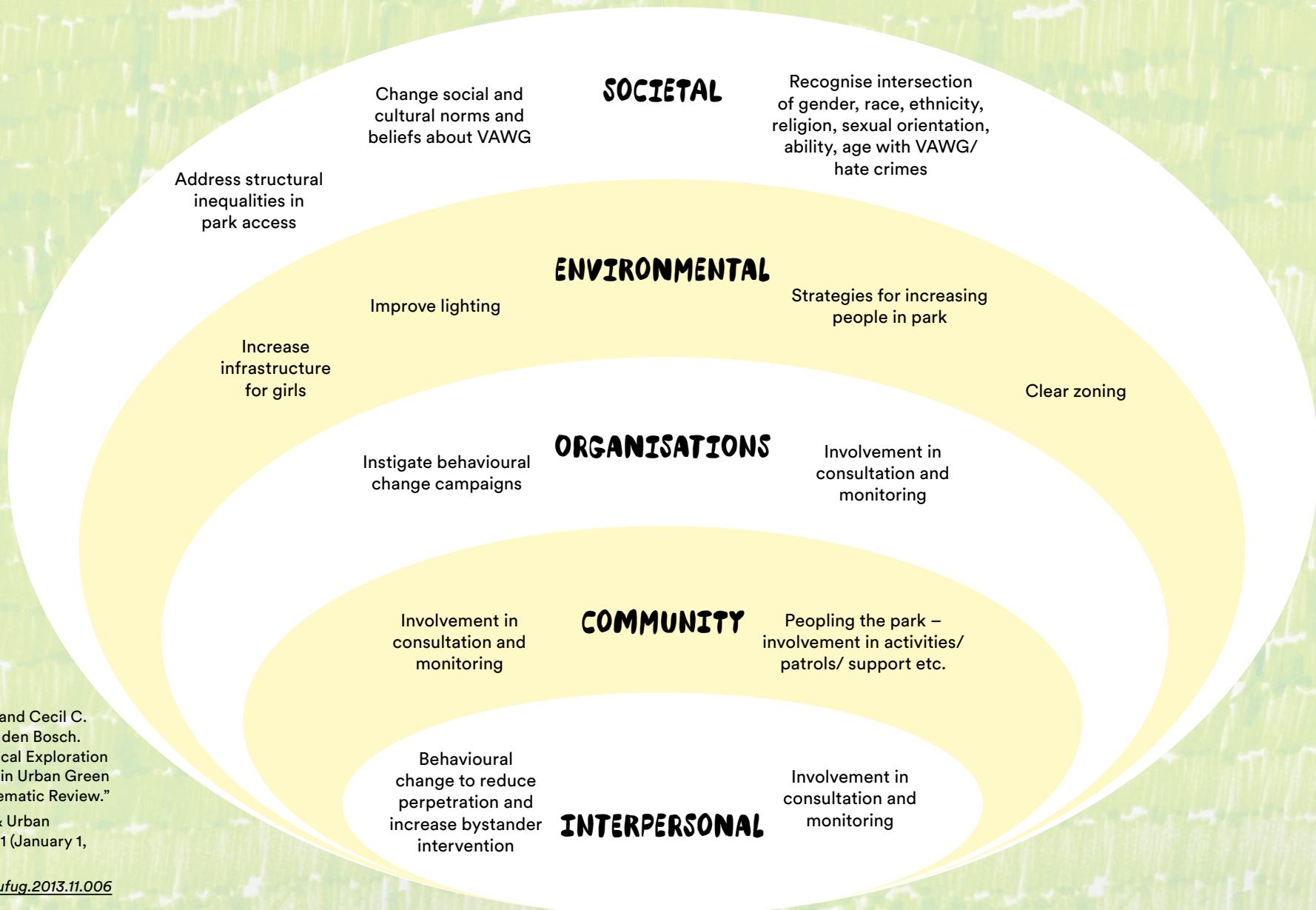
LIGHTING IS SUSTAINABLE & EFFICIENT TO RUN E.G. SENSOR LIGHTS THAT TURN OFF WHEN NOT IN USE, GROUND SPOT LIGHTS IN PATHS, LOW LEVEL LIGHTS



90%

of respondents said that lighting would be helpful to their safety

THIS STANDARD IS BASED ON AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL THAT INVOLVES ACTION TO ADDRESS VAWG AT DIFFERENT SCALES SIMULTANEOUSLY



Reference:

Maruthaveeran, and Cecil C. Konijnendijk van den Bosch. "A Socio-Ecological Exploration of Fear of Crime in Urban Green Spaces – A Systematic Review." Urban Forestry & Urban Greening 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 1–18.

doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2013.11.006

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Dymén, Christian, and Vania Ceccato

“An International Perspective of the Gender Dimension in Planning for Urban Safety.”

In *The Urban Fabric of Crime and Fear*, edited by Vania Ceccato, 311–39. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011.

doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4210-9_13

Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia, and Athanasios Sideris

“What Brings Children to the Park? Analysis and Measurement of the Variables Affecting Children’s Use of Parks.”

Journal of the American Planning Association 76, no. 1 (December 31, 2009): 89–107.

doi.org/10.1080/01944360903418338

Stummvoll, Günter

“Design Against Crime in Vienna: A Feminist Approach.”

Crime Prevention and Community Safety: An International Journal 6 (October 1, 2004): 71–82.

doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpcs.8140202

UN Habitat, (2021a)

A Guide for cities to sustainable and inclusive urban planning and design together with girls. (online) Available at:

unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/03/02032021_her_city_publication_low.pdf

Additional Resources

Make Space for Girls

“Home,” 2021.

makespaceforgirls.co.uk

World Bank

“Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design.”

World Bank, 2020.

worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design