

Right To The Street Podcast

Crime - transcript

Introduction

Eve: Welcome to the Right to the Streets edition of The GM Moving Podcast. Join the conversation about what makes our streets, parks, and public spaces joyful, welcoming places for people to be and to be active.

Join me, Eve Holt, Strategic Leader at GreaterSport on the journey around the streets, as we explore people's freedom to move about without fear. In each episode we hear about the roles we can all play to make where we live, work, and play places where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active.

We gather stories, experiences, and ideas as we speak to strategic leaders, decision makers, and lots of local people who are creating the conditions in place for everyday moving and active lives for all.

So in this, the very first episode of the Right to the Streets podcast series, we are talking about crime and the community. When we talk about safety on our streets, people's first thought is often around crime, policing and criminal justice, followed by faults and use of CCTV, lighting and surveillance in the built environment.

So we've decided to make that the starting point for this new series as we explore what makes the difference. In this rich conversation, we talk about the importance of centering the voices and experiences of victims and survivors, the need to address male violence and tackle the root causes to include a culture of misogyny and sexism in our society.

And we hear about the role of police, criminal justice, night-time economy sector, local authorities, transport planners, and urban designers. We also hear about the important role that the VCSE organisations, our community education, parents, carers, men and boys, can all play and do play in making our streets and public spaces more welcoming and safe.

We hear some local examples, like local action through Operation Lioness. We are also reminded the statistics, which tell us that one in four women suffer sexual violence and that 97% of women say they've been sexually harassed. And 85 to 90% of violent crime is committed by men and boys. We hear about

the power of stories, those we tell, and those that we hear amplified in the media and how they can shift our perception of safety and influence our responses.

So coming up today, you'll hear from some key leaders,

Kate Green: I'm Kate Green. I'm the Deputy Mayor for Greater Manchester with responsibility for police, crime and criminal justice.

James Faulkner: Hi, I'm Jim Faulkner. I am a Superintendent with Greater Manchester Police.

Nazir Afzal: I'm Nazir Afzal. I was the Chief Prosecutor for the North West of England. And, then Chief Executive of the country's police and crime commissioners.

Eve: Who are all contributing to strategies,

James Faulkner: So that perception versus reality is an issue. We are aware of it. We are trying our best to rebuild that trust and confidence that we have by being visible, by working in partnership with a whole host of different people, to make people, hopefully make people feel safer on the streets of Greater Manchester.

Eve: Thinking,

Nazir Afzal: It starts with listening and there are people in Greater Manchester that aren't heard, and we just need to make sure that their voices are heard.

Eve: And campaigns,

Kate Green: It's why we have our high profile 'Is this OK?' campaign. Really talking to men and boys about what they can do as allies to help women and girls feel safe on the streets

Eve: To help reduce crime across Greater Manchester.

Interview 1 - pt1

Eve: But first, let's head to North Trafford to speak to two local women who are delivering projects in the local community to help bring those crime statistics

down, and to shift perception of safety by creating more joyful environments for everyone. And you'll find us in the middle of a park in Gorse Hill.

So we're in Marje Kelly Park. It's a gorgeous, proper Manchester day. It's a bit grey, a bit drizzly. But we always say, get out whatever the weather. So here we are, ready to walk around the park, streets of North Trafford and hear from a number of local residents about what safer, more welcoming, joyful streets look like to them.

Our first guest walks up the path to greet us.

Eve: Hello.

Ruth Hannan: Hi.

Eve: What a great selection of hats we've got!

Ruth Hannan: Hats and umbrellas.

Eve: Nice to see you.

Ruth Hannan: Yeah, good to see you too...

Eve: How are you?

Ruth Hannan: I'm alright thank you.

I'm Ruth Hannan. I'm a local resident in Gorse Hill. I've lived here for just over 20 years, and I'm the chair of a local community group called Gorgeous Gorse Hill. We've been going seven years. I always lose track a little bit, cause in my mind it's still about 18 months. I'm also a trustee of a local charity called Gorse Hill Studios.

Eve: So we're here in Marje Kelly Park. Will you just tell us a little bit about this park and it's history?

Ruth Hannan: Well, this actually used to be the site of an old school and when the school was pulled down, it became a park and was unnamed. So it was one of a group and a local volunteer activist Marje Kelly used to come and walk her dog here every day and she'd point out problems with the park and get the council engaged, and it started to be referred to as Marje's Park. So one day I

had the genius idea that we should ask if it could actually be officially renamed Marje Kelly Park. We tried to keep it secret from Marje, but she did eventually find out. We got very close to it being secret, until we finally announced it. But yeah, it became officially Marje Kelly Park, I think in 2019. And now as a result of that, Marje has set up a friends of the park group and they're really active and we work with them. So we planted some trees here and we did a project with older residents asking them for their memories of parks and trees in the area. And we hung little carved wooden leaves on the trees with little quotes from people. And three of those trees are in Marje Kelly Park.

Eve: And we've got Grace has joined us...

Grace McCorkle: My name is Grace McCorkle, one of the co-founders of an organisation called Collaborative Women UK. Collaborative Women is a local based organisation. We specialise in providing women who have lived experiences of trauma, in particular domestic abuse, homelessness, mental health vulnerabilities at some point in their lives to access a variety of services.

They can access our housing support projects, which provide shared models, alongside the accommodation is a life skills programme where women have the ability to create their own pathway to self-empowerment, and that's getting back into employment or further education or volunteering or just building their confidence alongside our housing women can access Community Learning Hub, which is based in Stretford, and the Community Hub is run by Women for Women who are local residents of Trafford and also come afar from Oldham, Manchester, and Stockport. They put on a variety of programmes throughout the year where women can access. Majority of them, free of charge. And women have also gone on to find employment, having been unemployed for a long time,

Eve: Got a kid behind us, he's kicking a ball, just as you're meant to be doing in a park. And we are right by the tram line, aren't we? So we've had trams running past. I guess just describe this park really, cause people can't see it.

My immediate thought is it's quite nice cause it feels like you've got houses all the way around it. It's somewhere that's surveillance, if you want to use that word. You've got people basically that look over it and it's fairly small and open. Which my immediate feeling is that makes me feel a little bit safer here. It's not hugely hidden really.

Ruth Hannan: One of the things that's different about this park is that it is, I think it's very much felt like it belongs to the residents. So even when you come

in at night time, there's lots of people walking their dogs, and when you are here in the summertime, lots of children playing, and families and I think it does benefit from it is surrounded by houses cause it was a school. So it does have that real sense of ownership. It's as dark as every other park in Gorse Hill. None of the parks have got lighting. But I think there is a sense that people probably do feel more comfortable here. The friends group is very active and one of their things is to try and get improved gates, have more benches and spaces for people to come and spend time. Some of the other parks, they don't really have a great deal of houses around them or, they're not particularly overlooked. So on a night time, they genuinely are empty, whereas this does feel like a different space.

Grace McCorkle: This is the first time I actually didn't know this park existed. So it's actually fantastic as a resource. However, just looking around sometimes even with residential properties surrounding, it's good to hear then they've got an active community. And I actually do feel, although it's quite open, there's only one way in and one way out.

Women and girls often say that they are nervous to utilise open space regardless of how open it looks. And there is not that immediate reaction if there are neighbouring properties that people will come out to say, support. And we've had a number of cases over the years where people have been left and been attacked and people in surrounding houses have closed the blinds. So it's how active are they around, say criminality that's working in the area. Do they work with local police stations in terms of supporting them as well, if there's anything that comes on site. Plus it's a nice space, but at the same time, reservations whereby women and girls actively using open spaces do still feel a bit of a detachment from.

Ruth Hannan: I think parks are a funny one aren't they. They've got like dual personalities. They're like the nice sober friend in the daytime and then the angry drunk friend at night time because obviously in the daytime they have a completely different atmosphere. They're usually full of kids playing, families, or people just sat on a bench having a lunch break and things like that. And then at night time, you might just get a few dog walkers, then you might get groups of kids, you might get groups of blokes. And as a result, we start to see them in a different way.

And I think that's a big thing that I have tried to do with our community group here is shift how people see and experience spaces. Because I think a lot of it is perception. Gorse Hill, I can't speak for the rest of Trafford, but Gorse Hill's

crime rate is quite low in terms of your risk outside of your own home. Yet we still have empty parks on an evening.

I very rarely see groups kicking a ball around, and I think there is that disconnect with who is able to use these spaces, or feel they're able to use their these spaces. But I think one of the things that we did, we've done a lantern parade in Gorse Hill for the past three years, and Marje Kelly Park has been our end destination for the last two. And again, that's really shifting how people use a park on a night-time, they'd put lights in the trees and they'd put all lights on the railings. And it just shifted how the park felt. Again, it's not the same as having big spotlights, which don't necessarily make you feel safe. They just make you feel lit up. But having all these little twinkly fairy lights everywhere really shifted how it felt as a space in the darkness.

Eve: I feel like lighting's going to come up a lot in this series. I asked Ruth about her experiences of walking through the parks in the area and her perception of danger.

Ruth Hannan: To get from here to my house the quickest route is through Gorse Hill Park and to walk around it, it's only like an extra five minutes, but sometimes if it's raining, you're like, I don't really wanna have an extra five minutes in the rain. So sometimes I'll just be like, I'm gonna walk through the park. Because I can walk through the park and there is, and, and I shouldn't not be able to walk through the park. So I march through the park, still holding my keys, still feeling a bit nervous even though I know that there's not a particular high risk in this area. But I think I've gotta do this because I'm doing it for all women. But I think there is that, how do we shift that feeling like we can't walk through the park, but my husband walked through the park without worrying.

Probably the biggest risks risk to both of us is standing in dog muck that we can't see, but it's the perceived risk to me as opposed to him, and I think that's one of the things that we've really tried to do with Gorgeous Gorse Hill is change how an area feels for people that it feels like somewhere that is ours feels nice or feels safer. It's a bit like that broken window theory. If you're walking down somewhere and there's rubbish everywhere and broken windows, you think this place is really dangerous. But it's filled with flowers and art and softer than twinkly lights in trees, you start to feel different about it.

Eve: So it's got what you call a MUGA, isn't it? It's a classic, a multi-use games area. And I know anyone that's tuned into the Making Space for Girls have talked a lot about MUGAs because, whether it's somewhere that actually works

for everybody, because immediately you are enclosed. And that can create a safe sense of being trapped, not feeling safe.

So there's a lot of evidence now saying that we're gonna create spaces to be active like that. Actually, there are other ways in which you can both provide protections. So the balls aren't maybe flying out everywhere, or if you've got smaller kids that they're not gonna risk running out onto the road. But whereas, as a woman or a girl, someone has experienced any form of trauma, you don't feel like you're potentially trapped somewhere that could create a fear.

Grace McCorkle: It's not just a women and girls thing, because just as much street crime is happening to young men as well as, so it's a different perception on both sides of the story.

It's also beyond just the park group or people in the immediate area in terms of what we could do more differently isn't to communicate and work with wider groups and organisations. Not just the big establishments such as your town halls or your local authority, be it, the police, health, education, whatever.

Make a bigger community and make it something that we, as you said, change the mindset for everybody to say this is part of, this might be your immediate area, but if you live in Trafford, it's a space that should be seen as welcoming and beautiful for all. And I don't think we do enough of that. It's a significant part of the community that never gets to be part of conversations like this.

Ruth Hannan: I would absolutely agree and I think what Trafford doesn't do well, what it does is a lot of consultation, online consultation, where they present an already made idea that we comment on. What they don't do very well is really good co-production, co-design, and I think that parks would be an amazing way to start.

Grace McCorkle: We've still got such a set idea of parks based on Victorian promenading. We could be so bold. Just imagine what if it had been like, if you'd actually got all the kids to use that park. Whatever age they are, whatever gender they are, wherever they'll come from to say, what do you want this park to do and be? And then I think as well, that for me is another thing is, people will complain about parks getting damaged or vandalised. It's like, well that's cause you've given people no sense of ownership of them.

Let them be the ones that feel like if somebody snaps a branch off a tree, they've snapped the branch off their tree, not the council's tree. And I think that's a

massive thing for me is let people feel like it's their park and, and have a say in it.

Eve: I'm holding that thought about community consultation. We take a leisurely three minutes stroll down the road to Gorse Hill Park. So we've crossed over busy Talbot Road and we are now in Gorse Hill Park.

Aren't these gorgeous big gates. It's definitely a sense of quite a grand and creative welcome. And just to give people a bit of a sense of scale, I mean, this is eight times bigger than where we've been. More than that. Again, we've got a basketball court or another multi-purpose games area that is fenced off. But it's got a much lower fence actually, isn't it? And it looks much newer. There's a number of kids. We've got a group of kids playing cricket and football there, and then there's another playground. It's got a bit of more of a mix use, isn't it again? So it looks like it probably suits some older kids probably.

And yeah, quite a lot of trees can hear birds singing. We've got a few benches around, again, dotted about. I have to say immediately feels like a nice place to be. It looks quite cared for and well maintained, and we're next to Stretford Sports Village as well. So immediately you've got the school. So it definitely feels quite a bit activated. There's people here.

Ruth Hannan: It's a bit of a strange one cause it sits literally on an island between the two massive busy roads. So it actually makes it a challenge to get here easily I would say that's the big problem that it often faces, but it does have a lot more going on.

It has had quite a bit of recent investment and, I think the big thing is in the summer it is busy with families, but again, I think probably has a similar problem that Marje's park does is that once you get to the light turning, that use disappears.

Grace McCorkle: If we had the opportunity as a community to be more included within deciding what happens to our spaces, and especially if you pay council tax. It could be something that we could use and there's a plethora of things we could do to make it truly more user-friendly and it feel like it belongs to residents of the immediate areas and people of Trafford for collaborative women we're very much around when we do big events, is try to get things that run across the board of the whole community.

Yes, our focus is on women, but they are a piece of a bigger puzzle. And a lot of the things we like to do is where women can access onto include the families,

include the learning process across the generations, and be inclusive in terms of decision making, and I think it sets up a good blueprint.

Eve: It is interesting, just obviously it's a snapshot right now just to see who's in the park right now, isn't it. Because it is predominantly. We've got a group of teenage lads. There's one woman looks like over there who's walking a dog. But otherwise, most people walking through so far have been blokes. We haven't seen many women and girls so far passing through. And obviously this is at a particular time of the day, it's during the week.

But yeah, it would be interesting just to see who does use it? And does that have a particular gendered perspective? Because I guess a lot of this, we've come back to this, I love your description before Ruth of how parks change their character at night and that's come up over and over again, what is an amazing asset by day, isn't seen as an asset in the evening and how people that do use it in the evening, often rightly or wrong, get categorised as anti-social rather than pro-social. And I think of my teenage lads and I'm like, there's nowhere for them to go just as there's not really many places I can go in the evening.

Ruth Hannan: In Gorse Hill, we have endless planning permissions approved for yet another takeaway, and quite often they are the only place for young people to actually gather.

Why aren't we affording them other spaces so that they can be part of, not organised fun, because once you're a teenager you don't actually want to be part of organised fun. And I think parks present that opportunity. And what's interesting is the stranger danger risk, the statistics on that hasn't really changed over the years.

I'm no more at risk from a stranger attacking me now than I was when I was back in Selby as a ten year old, but the perception is there, whereas ironically, the thing that is now way more dangerous to me is a car. We have this narrative, especially with girls, and it's really propagated by all different avenues of it is our responsibility to keep ourselves safe.

You even see it with some of like the police awareness things, and I think there is something about we should be as a community, trying to make our spaces as open, accessible, and safe and welcoming to every member of our community as is feasible and as humanly possible. So that is older people, disabled people, boys, girls, women, men, everybody.

The big theme of this, two different parks has been boys playing. So how do we get boys to think about sharing those spaces. Not saying they've got to stop playing cricket or, or basketball, but there's a reason why there's no girls here. They're off school as well, so where are they? So it's not about girls having to claim things, but it's about getting this message across of, actually we should be thinking about how do we share these spaces together?

Because I think there is something about us all collectively saying, this is all of ours. How do we make sure everybody feels like it is all of ours? I think that was a big part of Gorgeous Gorse Hill was shifting that narrative. If you've ever been to Man United, down by Man United, there's a little cluster of takeaways. And everybody apparently fans call Gorse Hill Red Chippy Village. And that really made me angry as though like none of us who live here have any ownership of it. So that's why I came up with Gorgeous Gorse Hill cause that was actually like, all right, you might not think it's gorgeous, but we're gonna make it gorgeous.

And actually some bits of it are gorgeous. People have said they feel more proud because of the things we've done. So I think there is something about us as a community can make little incremental things. It shouldn't always be on the people who are the excluded ones, or the council or the police to go, we'll sort it all out for you. Cause that's not gonna necessarily make people feel like it's their space anymore. Don't worry, we've put a lot of floodlights up now, you'll be fine. It's daytime, girls still aren't here.

Eve: It's a really brisk afternoon. So we're on the move again and walk towards the main entrance to Gorse Hill Park.

So we're just at the other entrance for the park. So you can just hear Chester Road, really busy roads, as you said this is an island. And that's the other side. And it's, again, it's a really grand entrance, a big bricked archway. All these windows, they were boarded up. I mean it looks like a blank canvas. And I just wondered from the two of you, from everything we just talked about there, if we were to imagine if this entrance immediately said, you are welcome. You belong here. This is an invitation to come to play. What would that look like? What could we do?

Ruth Hannan: I'd like to see these buildings put back into use instead of what they are, which is fairly useless really. But I think that's a big thing with this park, if you think we've got bollards that block from the road and we've got big gates that are never fully open, and then we've got two bricked up gate houses, this would present a great opportunity to really work with the local community

on what that frontage could look like. I mean, personally, it needs a crossing, cause it's a swine to get across that road.

Grace McCorkle: Bang on with the crossing. I think it's a nightmare. And then I very much agree on a regular, everyday space, but who manages it? Allotments are massively expensive. They're not really attainable to many people. Could we do something that brings people together and also utilise, make resources that's sustainable for the immediate community as well as artwork. I mean, it fits nice for artwork, but can you eat art? Can you feed the family? And that's some of the things that I also look at in terms of open space. How can they be multifaceted in terms of usage?

Eve: That has to be one of my favorite quotes of the day from Grace. Can you eat art?

Interview 2

Eve: So let's leave Grace and Ruth for a while and join some of the key decision makers and influencers in Greater Manchester who are helping to reduce crime both in intervention and prevention. We're at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Offices in Manchester City Centre with Kate Green.

Kate Green: I'm Kate Green. I'm the Deputy Mayor for Greater Manchester with responsibility for police, crime and criminal justice.

Eve: Jim Faulkner.

James Faulkner: Hi, I'm Jim Faulkner. I am a Superintendent with Greater Manchester Police.

Eve: And Nazir Afzal.

Nazir Afzal: I'm Nazir Afzal. I was the Chief Prosecutor for the North West of England, and then Chief Executive of the Country's Police and Crime Commissioners.

Eve: Nazir is currently the Chancellor of Manchester University, but despite him not having crime in his job title anymore, he's publicly said many times that violence against women and girls is still very much a mission for him. So I start by asking him what he thinks are the key things that we need to focus on to address the safety of women and girls on our streets?

Nazir Afzal: I feel immensely privileged that victim survivors and NGOs that support them have shared their stories with me, and they do everyday and every hour of every day. And, it's their voices that need amplifying and their experiences that need sharing. And then, that will undoubtedly change the way authorities, organisations respond to them.

Everything I do is informed by the experiences of those who've suffered. And I used to say that as a prosecutor, every prosecution was a failure because somebody had been harmed to get to us. And the ideal scenario must be to prevent harm.

To talk about nationally, two women every week are murdered by their partners or ex-partners. Ten women every week kill themselves because of domestic abuse. One in four women suffered domestic abuse. One in five suffer sexual violence. According to the Ipsos MORI survey three years ago, 97% of women in this country say they were sexually harassed. I mean, that's the pandemic that will outlive the one that we've just been through.

And, it's not something that will go away anytime soon without people addressing all the significant issues. And one of the things that I think we need to focus on is not see this exclusively as a safety issue. A women's safety issue, but as a male violence issue, the realities are more than 90% of violence against women is carried out by men. But more than 90% of violence against men is carried out by men. So, once we start dealing with the causes, the symptoms and also what drives that, the misogyny that exists, the sexism that exists in our society. Unless we start addressing the root causes, we are not gonna be able to tackle this at all.

Eve: So in terms of people listening, what do you think they need to be doing if they're gonna help join this mission of prevention and address the root causes?

Nazir Afzal: I used to, and I'll still say I'm not an expert at all. The experts are the people who suffer, the people who've been impacted by this, the people who work day in, day out in protecting and preventing and guiding and supporting.

I think it's about ensuring that those voices are heard, and giving them the ability to share with you their journeys. We talk about things like trauma informed. What that means is somebody who's been impacted, knows better, what could have been done differently and what should have been done differently, and then it's responding to all of those things.

As I touched on a moment ago, men need to see their responsibility here. Time and time again, I get men saying to me, I'm walking down the street, and there's a woman in front of me, do I speed up? Do I slow down? Do I cross the road? They don't know. They really have no idea, but every single one of those actions will have an impact on the woman in front of them. And, we are in a situation where we need to educate more. We need to raise more awareness. We need to understand that whilst it is as prevalent as I said it was, it's still a minority issue. Very few of us will actually suffer harm. So we need to provide that reassurance.

But I also know that public confidence is driven by events. So when you have the terrible murder of Sarah Everard and every other week you seem to hear terrible stories of harm you begin to question whether you feel safe. And I think there has to be a great deal more effort going into giving people the tools to make themselves feel safe and make their communities feel safe. But you need to engage with as many people as possible to understand what works.

Eve: Kate, that's what we've been trying to do in Greater Manchester, haven't we? In terms of hearing people's voices, taking a whole system front approach. Can you talk through the approach in Greater Manchester and progress that we're making?

Kate Green: Women and girls, everyone feeling safe on the streets is a huge priority for the Mayor and for me. And we have been doing a lot of work in this in the combined authority over quite a few years. We have our ten-year gender-based violence strategy and that's got a number of aspects. Including making sure exactly as Nazir says, that we listen to the voices and experiences of victims and make sure that they get the outcomes that they want, feeling safe on the street, but also the criminal justice outcomes that they want, and the fact that we are working with perpetrators of gender-based violence and abuse to try to prevent their future offending.

It's also really important that we make it easy for people who experience sexual abuse, violence, harassment on the streets, that they know where to go and get support and services. And we've been working hard with the criminal justice sector and the voluntary community and faith sector, to make sure that those services are in place and accessible.

And of course, a really important piece is education. It's why we have our high profile 'Is this Ok?' campaign really talking to men and boys about what they can do as allies to help women and girls feel safe on the streets, asking men and

boys to call out unacceptable harassment that makes women feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

We know that most men and boys don't want women to experience this when they're out and about. They don't want their sisters, their friends, their daughters, their partners to have to go through this experience. So we are really working very hard to say you are our allies in this enterprise. We're proud that you're our allies, and we are very keen that you should feel confident to call out unacceptable behaviour when you see it. We also know that, of course, we want people to get out and enjoy this great city, and it's why we are putting a lot of effort into things like the work we're doing with providers of night-time entertainment bars, clubs, and so on.

We've got our Good Night Out Guide that was launched in time for Welcome Week at universities last Autumn. Why we support things like Village Angels and the LGBT Foundation, St. John Ambulance. And it's why too we focus really hard on working with partners in local governments so that we know that things like streets being clean and well lit. It's why we work a lot with Transport for Greater Manchester to make sure that people feel safe when they're traveling.

Eve: One of the challenges is that gap between the reality of crime and the perception of crime. Women have been telling us they haven't necessarily experienced, certainly anything such as significant they would describe for themselves, but they still feel that they're not safe on our streets. What would you say, Jim, in terms of how do we address that gap between women feeling that it's not safe and actually maybe it is safe for them?

James Faulkner: It's a really good question. And just to give you some real life examples of that perception versus reality. Around September of 2021, there was an article run on the BBC website about someone that went into a nightclub and was needlestick spiked.

That one incident, that one reporting, that one incident saw a 1400% rise in reported cases of needle stick spiking. So we had a real fear amongst our users of the night-time economy, in particular, women going into bars and nightclubs thinking they were gonna get stuck by a needle or have their drink spiked.

The reality is that yes, it does happen, but it's a really rare occasion that it does happen. The most prevalent crime for spiking is drink spiking. So the drugs that are going to drinks or as is most common, extra alcohol. When people are ordering a single vodka, they get a double or a treble by their friends.

So we know spiking occurs and I'm not at all trying to dismiss that spiking isn't an issue cause it is. But that one article saw a huge, huge perception of fear amongst people going into nightclubs, thinking they were gonna get struck by a needle. And, ultimately that role of the media is really important here.

And we go back again to what has already been referenced with Sarah Everard and that particular murder. Absolutely horrific and vile tragic case that involved a police officer. That, and subsequent things have come out through internal investigations in the metropolitan area have really affected, rightly affected the public trust and confidence in policing across the country.

But also in Greater Manchester, we know that our public trust and competence, in particular with women and girls, is not really where we want it to be. And that has a real effect on our legitimacy, our ability to go and police the areas of Greater Manchester is deeply affected when people don't trust us.

Because when people don't trust us, they don't tell us. And when they don't tell us, we can't investigate it, and we can't ultimately get a real picture of what is actually happening out there. So we know there's vast under-reporting in this arena. The advancing against women girls is not reported as much as we want it to be.

So we need to regain that trust. And all the initiatives that Nazir and Kate have spoken about we are heavily involved in. So we need to get more criminal justice outcomes. We need to give people the confidence that when they report a rape or a domestic abuse assault, that A. they're taken seriously. But they're treated with compassion and empathy. They're treated by people that know what they're doing with the right skillset that then can investigate their crime and take it to a hopeful, positive criminal justice outcome. There's a lot of work to do and, and I don't profess to sit here and say that we are the finished article cause we are not.

So that perception versus reality is an issue. We are aware of it. We are trying our best to rebuild that trust and confidence that we have by being visible, by working in partnership with a whole host of different people, to make people hopefully make people feel safer on the streets of Greater Manchester.

Eve: Often it's some of the more microaggressions that women and girls experience every single day in that highlighting that, is this okay? It's people thinking it's okay to wolf whistle, to make comments, experience that some of the girls at Stretford High had, for example, walking past workmen that often don't get reported cause people say that they maybe feel they won't be taken

seriously. That they won't be treated seriously. How do we shift that and tackle that culture?

Kate Green: If they don't feel that it's going to be properly followed up by the police, if they raise it with the police, they're not going to bother reporting it. That's why it has been so important that we've made sure that Greater Manchester Police does have the resources it needs and the expertise it needs to investigate crimes of sexual abuse and harassment, and that we have a criminal justice system that helps victims to take forward a complaint if they want to, but also make sure that there's support for them, whether they decide to pursue a prosecution case or not. And then I think there is a really important point too about the police not necessarily being the only place that you would go from some communities that might be being able to talk to voluntary community or faith organisations.

Maybe a way of indirectly making sure that we know what is going on the streets and in the home. Because as we've heard, most of the attacks against women take place in a domestic setting between people that they already know, and it's really important that we address that harassment and abuse and violence also.

Eve: So those community groups and schools and colleges and often local businesses all have a massive role to play, don't they? And I know you've talked about this before, Nazir, what does good look like? What can they do more of that helps?

Nazir Afzal: Do you know when you go past a building site, you'll see a sign saying, we are a considerate employer. That should be we are a listening employer. I've been working with Plymouth City Council, who have decided to accredit companies, businesses for their work around sexual violence, domestic abuse, violence, women, girls. So every business will become a third party reporting centre. Every business will require or ask its workforce to share with them any concerns they may have as low-level as they may be.

They may be low level, but they're high impact, and so it becomes everybody's business rather than a police business or a prosecutor's business or a local authorities business. That's how we change things. We bring it into everybody's business, everybody's day, rather than it just being seen as a if it's really serious I report to the police or if it's really serious, I go and tell an NGO or a faith group, whatever it may be. They have roles to play, absolutely. But I think we are in a pretty bad way right now. I mean, I think the conviction rates are really low, aren't they? One percent of all reports to police, that's only reports to police

and reports to police are a small number of reports that could be reported, so we're in a bad way, so we need to do much more around the preventative work and, it's about encouraging and involving everybody and seeing it as their responsibility and not just the responsibility of the authorities.

Eve: One of the things we're hearing repeatedly is the time of the day makes a massive difference in whether women and girls feel safe or not. So our mission really is we want everyone to be able to be active anytime of the day, whatever the weather, whatever the day, in whatever way works for them and whoever you are, this is women and girls in their complete diversity.

I mean there's loads of things that intersect on whether or not you feel you are welcome and you belong. So, there was a statistic of like 90% of women said that after dark, they don't feel safe on our streets. What can we do about that?

James Faulkner: We can make our streets a safer place to be. We can highlight the good work that everybody is doing in the area to make our streets safer.

We can design certain things out. So if there are issues with lighting, because the only difference between night and day light, if lighting in an area is an issue, then let's get lighting there. Let's get cameras there, let's get posters that tell victims what to do. So we can make our streets feel safer by physically making them safer, and advertising, promoting the good work that we are doing.

The media has a really important role to play in this. And, we need to promote all the really good work that we do across the partnerships to make our streets safer.

Nazir Afzal: It's the role of men here isn't it? I mean if men were to say, look, we're gonna, this place that we are gonna be in is gonna be really safe for women, and the role of allyship here is really important, then women will feel safe there.

You'll go somewhere where you think you're gonna be safe. If you're going somewhere where the men haven't spoken out, the people who run the business haven't spoken out about the subject. So you've got to recognise the importance of communication. Getting the message out that we are an employer, we are a place, we're an organisation that really believes in this, and you will feel safe in our premises. That I think sends out a strong message.

Eve: So I'm a Mum of three teenage boys and I have both there's a education of them in terms of their own behaviour and there's also their own perception of

feeling safe or not, living in Whalley Range in South Manchester. What do I say to them when one of them wants to go running around the local park and I find myself going, no, don't do that after dark, you are not safe. So I end up inflicting on them this sense of not being safe. I know that I feel safer if places are populated and if they're populated by people in their diversity. I want to see younger and older people. I want to see a mix of ethnicities, then I feel safe somewhere so often we end up further projecting and creating a sense of not being safe by telling people not to go out, not to go to places, not to go to certain places, but we also want to protect those that we love. What can I do and what as listening as parents, both to educate their own kids, but also to address that gap between reality and perception.

Kate Green: We don't want any no go areas, in Greater Manchester for anyone, whether that's women and girls, whether it's for men and boys, whether it's for non-binary people, everybody should feel safe when they're out and about at any time of day or night in Greater Manchester. And it is true that if there are more people out and about like you, you'll feel more confident, and safer. And that means we've got to make our public realm, our public spaces attractive and welcoming. Accessibility. If it's not easy to take your buggy into the park, that's another barrier to making the most of that space. And it may mean that it's left to a small group of people who are more likely to cause or experience harassment and abuse.

That's obviously going to require some investment, and that's why we try to work with local authorities to make sure that when we are investing in things that make certain parts of the community feel less safe and less appealing. Our Safer Streets investment helps to support their economic investment, their regeneration strategies, the way in which they're designing out crime, and working with public transport providers so that interchanges feel safe.

But I think we've also got to all feel confident. We don't want to shut ourselves away. We don't want to shut our young people away. But I think it is also important that we think about keeping ourselves and our friends safe when we're out and about. And that's what we've been talking about, isn't it? It's a shared responsibility.

Eve: And that's definitely our superpower, isn't it? That's what people referred to and they feel safe when they get eye contact. People smile, there's people that are familiar and we have all those, that social interaction that we know. Yeah, makes places feel joyful and welcoming and safe. And we can all help add to that.

Nazir Afzal: It starts with listening. We can have a criminal justice outcome. That's fantastic if you can get one of those successful outcomes. But actually people feel much more emboldened by the fact that somebody heard them. And there are people in Greater Manchester that aren't heard, and we just need to make sure that their voices are heard.

James Faulkner: Fear breeds fear. The more we tell our young people that it's not safe to be somewhere, the more that fear is perpetuated. We see that with knife crime in particular, people are carrying knives for fear of being attacked by someone with a knife. The overarching thing for me is upstanding behaviour. The more we have our men, our boys, our role models in society calling out this behaviour, the more that will generate a positive culture amongst our men and young boys, it is a societal problem. It's not one that one single agency is gonna fix. As a society we need to tackle it and, ultimately to call this behaviour out.

Kate Green: This is a great city. It's a great city to live in, to learn in and to work in. It's a great city to visit. So if you're not from here, we'd encourage you to come and have a look at us. You'll have a great time here, but we can be even greater. We can make it a really safe, welcoming space in whatever part of the city you are, whatever you are going out to do, whether that's for work or for leisure. Or because you're studying or you are just out and about in the streets to take a look at the area.

And we can only do that together in partnership with our partners in Greater Manchester Police, with our partners in the health service, with our partners in the education system. Schools, colleges, universities, student unions, with our partners in the public transport system, Transport for Greater Manchester, the Metro, the bus companies. We can only do it in partnership with one another. The young people are a bit ahead of us on this I think, and we should really be listening to them.

Eve: A great note to end on. We've all got a role to play. It's about our collective leadership and we can make Greater Manchester an even greater place to be.

Just imagine if all of us felt that we could go out any time of the day to any place and it be joyful, places you want to hang about to chat, to play, and be active. Well, that's exactly what Ruth Hannan is working hard to achieve in Gorse Hill with her project Gorgeous Gorse Hill.

Interview 1 - pt2

Eve: So let's rejoin Ruth and Grace from Collaborative Women on a busy Chester Road right in the heart of Old Trafford, where they've both got a rallying call to action to get us working together to create the conditions for safer streets for all. Ruth starts by showing you around one of her Gorgeous Gorse Hill sites where we huddled behind an electricity substation.

Ruth Hannan: Yes. So we're here on the corner of Chester Road and Avondale Road, and this is one of the spaces that Gorgeous Gorse Hill took over. Really, it was a grass verge with a small substation on it.

And we told the council we were gonna take it on. We've added Planters, tyre planters, we've added art to the substation. So this is a community taken back control space. And then we've got mosaic bollards across the road, they're ours as well. And that is all about how do you turn a very drab, functional space into something that brightens people's day really.

Eve: What that's gorgeous?

Ruth Hannan: That might be the word I'm looking for. And so who comes and uses this space, we as a community do with the planters. We've got a couple of other spots that have got more seating options in them. So we've got one that's on the Canal Bridge that have got benches, that is a genuine pocket park. Kids really love it. We see kids playing there.

Eve: I can see there's a bit of a rhubarb growing over here. Yeah. Back to edible art and all the rest of it. So in terms of people then taking ownership of space and making places gorgeous. Have you seen an impact then on local crime, on antisocial behaviour from doing that?

Ruth Hannan: I mean, I think the most obvious one, and I'll do air quotes around crime, is the reduction in tagging. We install ours on street furniture, so, like Openreach boxes, bollards, roller shutters. Where we've put art I think I could probably count maybe only two incidents where we've had tagging happen after the art has been installed. So I think that's a massive one.

It's that shift in people feeling like it's something uncared for to something that is cared for. So I think that that's the big shift. The other one is the public expression of how much the community cares about a place. I'm not saying suddenly crime is gonna stop overnight, but that low level lack of care, people chucking litter and tagging and things like that, that has reduced as a result of the community going, this is ours. We like it. We want you to show the same

care for it that we have. And I think that's a big part of what we've seen over the past few years.

Eve: Grace, what do you think needs to happen for more people, communities, groups to feel that they can take ownership of spaces and places in this way?

Grace McCorkle: I think individuals who've had trauma such as domestic abuse, homelessness. mental health vulnerabilities. Projects like working with Gorgeous Gorse Hill and collaborations with organisations like Collaborative Women, Gorse Hill Studios and many others will be a good opportunity for them to come together. It's understanding how they feel first and foremost, creating spaces that they can feel that trust, build up a camaraderie and be a place of peer support with one another.

Then be in a mind of collective thinking in order to affect change. I feel from this operation today, it's putting an ask to our local politicians in terms of if we together as two organisations and others can come together to do some form of proposal. What can they do to come round the table and that be a conversation led by those who are most at risk or have suffered an experience, harm against their persons in the past and effectively change how our public space looks like.

It's having people who very rarely get spoken to having the opportunity to say what their lived experience is within a certain subject matter and given their perspective in how it can be made different. And there also be an ask, a political ask to lead us to come to the table to meet them. If you're dealing with women who've been, assaulted, sexually assaulted on the street, it's going to be different from an individual who's experienced trauma within the home.

If you are dealing with young girls, it's gonna be different from young men who have been in involved or been a victim of crime and also again, people with disabilities. So it's for one, for us as a unit to come together, create an opportunity for people to have a conversation. And I think as an ask from ourselves, I think that's something we are going to look at and discuss. What can we look at in terms of affecting change and walk the talk. I think that's the main thing.

Eve: Obviously this project Right to the Streets has a real focus on how we enable women and girls to be active, physically active. But what I'm hearing here is just a key invite to active listening from everybody playing an active role as local residents, citizens, and thinking like actually, can you help take ownership of local space? And then how partners are active in their invitation to

people to participate and to play a role. So thank you very much. Thanks both of you for your time and for everything you're doing. It's brilliant.

Outro

What a great conversation. It's clear from that discussion that whilst policing, reporting and street surveillance have an important role to play, they by no means provide a silver bullet. If we want our streets to feel welcoming and joyful for all, a wider lens is needed to include and build on the actions we take in our schools, community groups, and own homes as active citizens and neighbours.

We all have a role to play as this podcast is just the start of the conversation. We'd love to hear from you. Tell us what's working in your area when it comes to reducing crime on the streets and making places more gorgeous. Is it a local initiative? Perhaps you too have a community garden project that's helping reduce anti-social behaviour and increased pro-social interaction.

Whatever it is, let us know and we'll share your thoughts in future episodes of this podcast. We've got a few ways you can get in touch. You can tell us on social media we are on Facebook and Twitter search GM Moving or GreaterSport. You can also leave us a voicemail. You can find the link in the episode show notes and on our GM Moving website, search 'Right to the Streets Podcast'.

A big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this episode. We'll be releasing more episodes throughout the next few months, so keep an eye on our social media pages for when the next one will be released, or simply hit follow or subscribe on whatever podcast player you're listening to right now. This means the latest episode will go straight into your library as soon as it's released.

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