

Walk and Talk scheme - addressing safety concerns from female members of the public

A scheme which offers women the opportunity to book a walk with a female police officer or police community support officer (PCSO), to show them areas where they have felt vulnerable or unsafe.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Community engagement
Organisation	Avon and Somerset Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Local authority Private sector

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	September 2023
Scale of initiative	National
Target group	Women

Aim

The Walk and Talk scheme aims to:

- identify areas where women feel vulnerable or unsafe in their local communities
- encourage women to use the StreetSafe app
- encourage engagement between female members of the public and the police force

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the Walk and Talk scheme are to:

- improve women's feelings of safety and prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) offences
- increase women's trust and confidence in the police
- increase police presence in areas that have been reported as unsafe
- increase women's use of the StreetSafe app in reported areas

Description

In response to the murder of Sarah Everard, Avon and Somerset Police invited women to meet with female officers or police community support officers (PCSOs) to show them areas in which they feel vulnerable or unsafe in their local communities. 'Walk and Talks' are open to women aged 18 and above who wish to share their worries or concerns regarding their safety in the local area with

officers.

To apply, members of the public need to complete a form which can be found on the force's website. Once the form has been submitted, it is sent to the local neighbourhood policing team who contact the applicant and arrange a convenient time to meet them. The walks occur on an ad-hoc basis as and when requested by female members of the public.

Prior to conducting 'Walk and Talks', officers and PCSOs receive a one-off training session either on Microsoft Teams or in person. The contents of the training session include:

- an overview of how the scheme works
- frequently asked questions
- how to use the StreetSafe app

There is no set time for the duration of a Walk and Talk session. Female members of the public are encouraged to discuss their concerns for safety and officers will speak about the force's VAWG strategy. During the session, female members of the public are encouraged to download and use the StreetSafe app. The app, developed by POLICE.UK, allows users to anonymously report safety concerns. This includes issues like poorly lit streets, abandoned buildings, or vandalism, as well as instances where an individual feels unsafe due to someone following them or being verbally abusive.

After the Walk and Talk, the local neighbourhood policing team then work with one or more of the following partners to discuss and action the issue(s) raised:

- local councils
- housing developers
- local businesses

Those who have participated in the Walk and Talk are encouraged to complete a feedback survey. To help promote the completion of this survey, a QR sticker was produced for officers and PCSOs to give to participants of the scheme. If any concerns are raised in the survey, an officer will follow up with a call or a visit.

There is no cost involved for the Walk and Talk scheme.

Evaluation

An evaluation is currently ongoing and is being led by Avon and Somerset Police. The evaluation is measuring data from the feedback survey to see if there has been an increase in feelings of safety and trust and confidence in the police.

Once completed, the evaluation report will be presented to the senior leadership team.

Overall impact

- as of March 2025, over 100 'Walk and Talks' have taken place
- early responses from the feedback survey have shown an increase in feelings of trust and confidence towards the police as a result of the Walk and Talk
- there has been an increase in patrols in areas where women have reported feeling unsafe and in one area, street lighting has been fixed and in a new housing development more lighting has been installed

Learning

- early engagement with partner agencies is key to ensure they are supportive of the scheme
- ensure a good standard of training is delivered to officers to enable them to understand the reasons for the walk and talk scheme
- an initial force-wide event was conducted for publicity; however, this did not receive a large uptake
- Walk and Talk is now rolled out across Avon and Somerset and there has been some interest from other forces

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