
safeguarding in public spaces pilot



research report

saferlondon

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1 foreword



Foreword by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

Keeping young people safe and tackling violence against women and girls are two key commitments made in the London Policing and Crime plan earlier this year.

A core priority within this is to reduce harm to children and young people and this has included making child sexual exploitation (CSE) a London-wide priority.

We know from the MOPAC and NHS England commissioned London CSE Needs Assessment that peer-on-peer abuse accounts for 55% of all CSE cases in London and up to 85% in some boroughs. We also know that young women are the most affected, and that abuse often takes place outside the family home, with young women experiencing CSE often being reported as missing from home.

In order to protect and safeguard young Londoners we need a better understanding of where young people are at highest risk. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) are committed to working with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and other partners to identify these areas. In commissioning the CSE Safeguarding in Public Spaces pilot we have taken steps towards our goal of identifying areas where young people feel least safe.

This important piece of work has highlighted that we need to change and develop our safeguarding procedures to ensure we consider the needs of young people in communal spaces. Our Policing and Crime Plan includes some key initiatives supporting young people, however we know there is always more that can be done.

This report emphasises the need for greater awareness raising on how to recognise and respond to CSE with both the general public as well as professionals in public

spaces. It also shines a light on the crucial role of youth services and Peer Advisors in reaching out to those at risk.

Young people need to have access to people they trust and spaces they feel safe in, in order to feel confident to access the support they need.

We are committed to ensuring that the voices of young Londoners are heard and reflected in the work that we do. I am delighted to have supported this pilot in which young people's engagement was integral at all stages of the work. From the shaping and design of the project and resources, through to the public engagement, the voices of young Londoners can be heard throughout.

This approach has given us unique insight and increased our understanding of young people's views of their own safety in London and what they would like put in place to protect them.

I look forward to working with partners to take forward the recommendations in the report.

Sophie Linden
Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

2 executive summary

Safer London's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)¹ Safeguarding in Public Spaces pilot aimed to scope and evaluate an innovative contextual safeguarding model, applicable in a range of community settings. The initial idea for the project came about after a shopping centre's management team proactively approached Safer London, wanting to improve their young customers' feelings of safety while in their shopping centre.

The project built on previous research in the area of contextual safeguarding alongside the experience and knowledge gained from Safer London's work around vulnerable adolescents through its direct services such as Empower. Contextual safeguarding recognises that the traditional framework of child protection is limited, as the focus is on safeguarding against risk within the family and home. This approach can fail to take into account or adequately address young people's experience of harm beyond the home or from peers. This is particularly the case for vulnerable adolescents.

In London, 55% of CSE is actually committed by perpetrators of similar age to the victim. The 2016 London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment found that peer-on-peer abuse accounts for as much as 85% of CSE in some London boroughs.²

In order to take appropriate action to protect young people, we need to include public spaces in the safeguarding framework. Interventions, together with

support, are required in the places where young people socialise and spend time, such as shopping centres and transport hubs.

Safer London recognises the right of young people to participate in, and influence, decision-making about their lives and wellbeing. We recruited 14 Peer Advisors aged 16-25 who supported the implementation of the project and ensured young people's voices were heard throughout. They co-produced resources, raised awareness about CSE and engaged young people within public spaces about their perceptions of safety. The project comprised four strands:

- peer education,
- supporting and training professionals,
- creating a CSE Safeguarding in Public Spaces Toolkit, and
- research on Awareness and Experiences of CSE in Public Spaces.

¹ The 2017 Home Office definition of CSE is 'Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf

² Sexual Violence against Children & Young People. The London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment 2016 for MOPAC & NHS England (London): https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sexual_violence_against_children_young_people_needs_assessment_report_2016.pdf

The research sought to establish how young people understood CSE, how safe they felt in public spaces and their views on improving safety. It was conducted across four shopping centres in different areas of London, where Safer London Peer Advisors and staff spoke to young people and adults about:

- their awareness of child sexual exploitation,
- their views on young people's safety in shopping centres,
- what help is available for young people in shopping centres, and
- how to improve the safety of young people in public spaces.

In these four shopping centres Peer Advisors interviewed 642 young people and 83 adults capturing a wide range of views and experience.³

Key Findings

Overall, Safer London's research uncovered a concerning picture of young people feeling unsafe in public spaces in London, not knowing where to turn for help, as well as adults who felt unable to identify young people at risk from sexual exploitation. We did, however, gather many ideas from young people and adults on how this situation can be improved.



³ For the purposes of this research we defined young people as aged 25 or younger, and adults as respondents over 25 years old.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) - Awareness and views

Over half of all young people surveyed had some levels of CSE awareness. Common themes raised included: adults hurting children, online grooming, sexual violence, images (nudes) circulating on the internet, people taking advantage of others and women and girls being exploited. Although not stated explicitly, themes of power and control are threaded through the narrative.

“When young people are made to do sexual things. Not consent.” [Young person]

“When you feel intimidated and someone tries to touch you in a sexual way.” [Young person]

“Children exploited for sexual things, don’t know how to describe. By adults, could be by other young people too.” [Adult participant]

68% of young people we interviewed knew of young people being approached and filmed in shopping centres with sexual comments or judgements about them (known as ‘baiting out skets’). These videos are then uploaded onto YouTube without consent from the individual being commented on. The vast majority of young people said this was unacceptable, and spoke about the negative impact such videos can have on a young person’s school life, mental health and safety.

“They (the young women in these videos) feel horrible. Happened to a girl in my school and she didn’t come in for months.” [Young person]

“It’s dangerous – labels stick for life.” [Young person]

A small minority of young people said they thought the videos were okay, as “its entertainment”; however, they still acknowledged that the videos invaded young women’s personal privacy.

Responses by adults demonstrated that, while 80% had heard of CSE before, **less than half felt able to identify young people at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation.**

Over a quarter of adults who participated in Safer London’s survey said they have witnessed something in shopping centres that would make them think that a young person is at risk of CSE. Adult understanding of CSE was generally informed by the media and related to adult perpetrators rather than peer-on-peer abuse. Responses also demonstrated some victim-blaming attitudes, in particular towards young women:

“Some young women come to the shopping centre really tarted up. I just saw one up there with her clothes and make-up.” [Adult participant]

The majority of adults also said that they think it is the parents’ responsibility to keep young people safe in shopping centres, despite most young people coming to public spaces alone or with their friends. This highlights a general lack of awareness that it is everyone’s duty to safeguard young people and signals a real need to raise awareness about peer-on-peer abuse and safeguarding in public spaces.

Safety in shopping centres

Safer London found that approximately **one in four (23%) young people reported they had felt uncomfortable, intimidated or scared while in shopping centres.** Young women were particularly affected: around one in three young women (29%) reporting this, compared with approximately one in six young men (14%).

Young women described experiences of sexual harassment, including being approached by groups, being grabbed, and people taking photos of them:

“Groups of guys coming up to you and following you around even if you say no, and making sexual comments to you.” [Young woman]

“One of the themes that came up often was mostly young females who said that sometimes they didn’t feel safe in the shopping centre [...]. Generally they talked about older boys being loud and dominant, not necessarily aggressive, but it made them feel vulnerable.” [Peer Advisor]

Nowhere to go

Alarming, young people reported that if they were in trouble, they wouldn't know what to do or where to go. **54% of young people told us that they thought there was no help available in shopping centres, or if there was help available they didn't feel confident they could ask for it.** This was often attributed to the perceived attitudes of adults or staff:

"Security don't care ... only stop shoplifters."

[Young person]

"Victim-blaming so kids would not be able to talk to anyone." *[Young person]*

"Older generation looking at us in a certain way just because we are young." *[Young person]*

When asked what they would do if someone was harassing and/or filming them in shopping centres, young people most commonly answered that they would confront the person/group themselves or leave the area.

Over one third of young people didn't think there was somewhere they could go if they were unsafe, and would instead seek out alternative places:

"Many young people said that if they feel unsafe they would go to the toilets or a store, or somewhere more crowded, but that doesn't mean that they'll be safe because they're not telling anyone or asking anyone for help, so they go somewhere else, but no one knows you're in trouble." *[Peer Advisor]*

Adult respondents also had concerns about levels of safety in public spaces, including reports of parents not allowing their teenage children to go to shopping centres, particularly on their own.

Improving Safety

Our results showed that young people often felt that there was no one to talk to and nowhere to go if they felt unsafe. Unsurprisingly then, the main things young people called for were:

- **Safe spaces, hubs or help desks specifically for young people:**
"Places that you could go if something was happening." *[Young person]*
- **Approachable security and staff:**
"Security has to be less suspicious and more welcoming." *[Young person]*
- **Youth workers/peer advisors who they could talk to and who would understand them:**
"After school young people congregate here and no one understands them." *[Young person]*
- **Both male and female staff being available – almost half of young women had a preference for a female adult to speak to:**
"[Women] understand more." *[Female participant]*

Adult survey participants echoed many of these ideas, together with Youth Workers being available, raising awareness and displaying key information in public spaces. As part of this pilot, Safer London delivered training to shopping centre staff. Participants included security and cleaning teams and car park attendants. The training proved to be beneficial in improving staff's understanding of CSE and in building their confidence to intervene:

"The teams are more aware about these issues and said it was very helpful when dealing with young people; now they're thinking about it and being more aware, they think, 'what if this is something else, what if there are deeper issues?' and they speak to someone about their concern, so it was an eye-opener really." *[Marketing Manager, The Mall, Walthamstow]*

Recommendations

- **All staff in public spaces such as shopping centres should be trained in safeguarding, including how to respond to CSE.** This needs to go beyond the traditional security enforcement, and health and safety approach that currently exists.
- **Policies and procedures on safeguarding and CSE are needed in all shopping centres, including designated safeguarding leads and CSE champions.** This approach is also needed in other public spaces such as transport hubs, leisure spaces and parks. Staff must be trained to understand the importance of these policies and how to implement them.
- **All public spaces should have a designated and clearly signposted safe place for young people which they can go to should they feel unsafe or concerned.**
- **Places where young people, particularly young women, go to when they feel unsafe (such as cafés, shops or toilets) should have information readily available with details of safe spaces, advice and helplines.** Alongside this information, they should be reassured that security or local staff are trained and able to provide support.
- **Investment is needed so that the Youth and Voluntary Sector can have an in-person presence (either Youth Workers or Peer Advisors) in public spaces that can deliver outreach, including gender-specific support, developed in partnership with young people and relevant staff.**
- **Businesses operating in public spaces need to be engaged and encouraged to participate in the creation of safe spaces, working alongside and involving young people.**
- **A public awareness campaign is needed to build a better understanding of CSE and challenge some of the negative attitudes towards young people, especially young women.** The campaign should highlight that it is everyone's duty to safeguard young people, and that peer-on-peer abuse is a real concern in public spaces.



3 introduction

Often frameworks and policies relating to CSE are built upon the assumption that young people are at risk of being sexually exploited by adults. While this is regularly seen throughout London, 55% of CSE is actually committed by perpetrators of similar age to the victim. The 2016 London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment found that peer-on-peer abuse accounts for as much as 85% of CSE in some London boroughs.⁴

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding children and young people that recognises and responds to their experience of harm beyond the home.⁵ It recognises that the traditional framework of child protection is too often limited to risk within the family home and fails to take into account young people's experience of harm beyond the home.

Currently, police and security patrols are used to keep young people safe in public places. However, this approach does not lead to high levels of engagement, is rarely preventative and the support available often does not sufficiently identify risk or meet the needs of young people. In order to provide an effective response, services need to provide interventions in the places where young people socialise and spend time in such as shopping centres, transport hubs and their neighbourhoods. Research on peer-on-peer abuse has found that young people are most often experiencing or at risk of CSE in their social fields, including public spaces.⁶

Large shopping centres have always been hot spots for young people. Young women experiencing CSE and who are missing from home often frequent these locations as they provide an anonymous warm space accessible 24/7 with free Wi-Fi. Through our one-to-one work with young people, Safer London is aware that

in these spaces, the risks associated with CSE can be further heightened as they are also frequented by other vulnerable young people and known gang nominals. Through our work with young people and initial scoping work at an East London shopping centre, Safer London identified that young women had experienced victimisation through being filmed or having sexually explicit comments made about them in 'baiting out skets' videos. These videos were filmed within shopping centres and uploaded to YouTube without consent.

Shopping centre staff were largely unaware of the risks associated with social media, and how these videos are associated with an increased risk of sexual violence towards young women. Where security staff had sought to engage young people around this issue, it had primarily been from an enforcement approach.

Safer London's CSE Safeguarding in Public Spaces pilot aimed to build the capacity and capability of professionals, and develop resources which could be used across London to bridge this gap through scoping, piloting and evaluating an innovative contextual safeguarding model. A peer support and bystander model was developed to improve the safeguarding of young people in public spaces and their communities.

This is the final research report which shares our findings based on surveys with **642 young people (aged 25 and younger)** and **83 adults (over 25 years old)** in shopping centres across London. The sites included Westfield in Stratford, Whitgift and Centrale shopping centres in Croydon, and The Mall in Walthamstow. The outreach sessions took place during school holidays in December 2016 and March, July and August 2017.



4 Sexual Violence against Children & Young People. The London Sexual Violence Needs Assessment 2016 for MOPAC & NHS England (London): https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sexual_violence_against_children_young_people_needs_assessment_report_2016.pdf

5 <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

6 Peer- on- peer abuse: safeguarding implications of contextualising abuse between young people within social fields - Dr Carlene Firmin <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/assets/documents/repository.pdf>
Towards a Contextual Response to Peer-on-Peer Abuse: Research and Resources from MsUnderstood local site work 2013-2016. Firmin, Curtis, et al. https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/assets/documents/Towards-a-Contextual-Response-to-Peer-on-Peer-Abuse_161013_170057.pdf

4 pilot project overview

The Safeguarding in Public spaces pilot consisted of the four following strands:

4.1. Peer involvement and education

This strand involved recruitment and training of Peer Advisors to develop and deliver the research and community engagement elements of the project.

There has been increasing recognition of children and young people's rights to participate and influence decision-making about their lives and wellbeing. Safer London's approach has always been to work in a collaborative way with young people. We recognised the importance of involving young people in shaping this project to engage young people within public spaces as peers to enable more open conversations around difficult topics. To ensure that young people's voices were heard at all stages of the pilot, we also used Peer Advisors to co-produce the materials and research questionnaire used to engage with young people.

Additionally, Peer Advisors were also exposed to valuable new opportunities and experiences, which supported their skills development. Safer London recruited and trained 15 peer advisors covering the following topics:

- CSE awareness and Champion Training (developed from Safer London's Champion Training for professionals) that included a focus on self-care and building resilience,
- talking to the public and how to manage challenging behaviour, and
- research overview - including co-production of the research questionnaire.

Following training, Peer Advisor outreach sessions took place within school holidays over the year to maximise reach to young people, including half terms, and multiple sessions in Christmas, Easter and Summer Holidays.

The model involved Peer Advisors having a stall and base at the shopping centres. They were supported throughout their time by a Project Manager and a Safeguarding Specialist, who prioritised both their welfare and wellbeing. The Project Manager co-ordinated the Peer Advisors and helped risk assess which individuals /groups to approach. The Safeguarding Specialist was on hand to manage any specific enquires and respond to any safeguarding issues that were raised by Peer Advisors, staff, young people or adults who participated in the surveys.

A safe space within the centre was designated at every site during the outreach sessions, so that if any disclosures or safeguarding concerns were raised, a private space was available for 1:1 support. In addition, the staff could also make referrals into local Young People's Advocate (YPA) provision through Safer London's Empower Programme, so that ongoing support could be provided, where necessary.

As well as completing electronic surveys using Ipad's with young people and community members, Peer Advisors also engaged with members of the public using CSE resources and information leaflets available at the stall. The involvement of Peer Advisors involvement was invaluable in developing resources:

"They had incredible insights in how to improve the research materials; not just making the questionnaires 'young-people friendly' but really thinking about what would be important questions to include, and what would engage the public"
[Staff member]

At the end of the project, Peer Advisors reported that, as a result of this work, they felt their confidence had improved, as well as their understanding of CSE. They had also enjoyed being part of something meaningful and wanted to be involved in similar projects.

Comments from Peer Advisors included:

"It was challenging in a good way, to go up to groups [of young people], it made me go out of my comfort zone but I liked it, it helped me with my confidence."

"I learned a lot for myself but also from other people's perspectives on CSE."

"It made me feel good about myself because I know it's helping other young people."

It makes you talk to lots of people from various backgrounds, so it's good and helped me grow as a person."

"It was good to meet new people with similar mind-sets [referring to the other peer advisors]"

"I enjoyed it because it was my first proper job experience, I enjoyed the work. It was interesting to see what other people thought about the topic [CSE]"

Peer Advisors also reflected on the importance of the project and next steps.

Comments from Peer Advisors included:

"Females are not confident in talking about it [their experiences] and having to know that there is people talking about it, and to know that people like us are available to help them is really, really good."

"I think young people we talked to learned about CSE and also about safety, a lot didn't realise what made them feel safe or unsafe so they learned about that."

"Shopping centres are definitely a good place to approach young people"

"For me one of the main learnings was that CSE is common but so hidden. No one talks about it. During the training one of the other girls [another peer advisors] said that now she knows the signs, she's thinking one of her friend might be experiencing CSE."

"I learnt a lot for myself but also from other people's perspectives on CSE."

"I think young people we spoke to did learn something, they realised [CSE] is a serious think so that's a good thing to be part of, helping other people being more aware."

"It'd be good to continue but maybe do it outside as well not only in shopping centres."

"It'd be good to engage parents too cause when they [young people] were with their parents we couldn't speak with them."

4.2. Support and training professionals

Safer London knows from experience that if our work is to have a systemic effect, we need to change the environment for young people. This means not only working with them, but also supporting professionals to create awareness and help them identify those at risk of violence, vulnerability and exploitation. The Home Office's 2015 Ending Gang, Violence and Exploitation Programme and the National Crime Agency's Assessment of national risk 2016, highlighted that a significant number of groups/gangs and/peers who exploit vulnerable people to facilitate crime by groups and gangs - come from London. The London Safeguarding Children's Board, developed as part of the London Child Protection Procedures, highlighted the need for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training and awareness at a local level and to a wider group of stakeholders.

As part of this initiative, Safer London upskilled professionals at shopping centres to identify and appropriately support and signpost young people experiencing or at risk of CSE. The training included CSE awareness, online and social media safety and information on missing young people. Feedback from each session fed into this research and toolkit development. Additionally, Safer London was able to help shopping centre management review their internal protocols and procedures. We hope that this sharing of learning and knowledge will be embedded into shopping centre internal protocol and procedures going forward.

"The teams are more aware about these issues and said it was very helpful when dealing with young people, now they're thinking about it and being more aware, they think "what if this is something else, what if there are deeper issues?" and they speak to someone about their concern, so it was an eye-opener really." [Marketing Manager, The Mall, Walthamstow]

"I received very positive feedback from the two shopping centres directors [Whitgift and Centrale] who relayed that the training their security teams received was exemplary. Their staff directly fed back to them that they really enjoyed this training, it made them see things differently when engaging with young people and it was a real eye-opener for them." [Head of Operations, Croydon Town Centre Business Improvement District Ltd]

4.3. Production of a CSE Safeguarding in Public Spaces toolkit

Based on the findings from the other strands including work on local training and protocols, we developed a toolkit for professionals on CSE in public spaces. Feedback from young people and members of the public was also collated into the toolkit, as well as key learning points and tips for contextual safeguarding implementation. The toolkit was developed with a broader audience in mind so that it could be disseminated across other community settings such as parks and transport hubs.

The toolkit will be accessible online at: http://saferlondon.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/10/CSE_Toolkit.pdf

4.4. Producing research on awareness and experiences of CSE in public spaces

Building on existing research, Safer London co-produced a questionnaire with Peer Advisors that primarily looked at young people's views on and awareness of CSE and safety in public spaces. The questionnaire was also designed to look at how adults and shopping centre staff perceived perceptions safety in public spaces.

The findings from this research, it is hoped, will help build a picture of the current levels of CSE awareness amongst young people, how safe they feel in public spaces and what changes they want to see to improve safety.

5 research on awareness and experiences of CSE in public spaces

Methodology

We completed surveys with **642 young people (aged 25 and younger) and 83 adults (over 25 years old)** in shopping centres across London. Of the 83 adult surveys, 21 were completed by members of staff at shopping centres including security guards, cleaning staff and a car park manager.

The sites included Westfield in Stratford, Whitgift and Centrale shopping centres in Croydon, and The Mall in Walthamstow. The outreach sessions took place during school holidays in December 2016 and March, July and August 2017 to maximise engagement

The first group of Peer Advisors were recruited in November 2016 and a second group in January 2017. The Peer Advisors were trained on CSE, identifying vulnerabilities, responding to disclosures, safeguarding, self-care and assessing risk and community engagement. They co-designed and led on the development of the surveys.

Feedback from young people, family and community members and professionals was gathered on:

- feelings of safety within shopping centres;
- awareness and understanding of CSE in community settings;
- key issues and barriers to accessing support; and
- help-seeking behaviour and recommendations to improve safety.

Safer London utilised learnings gleaned from the first series of outreach sessions in December and in consultation with Peer Advisors, adapted the survey to explore views on young people's safety in greater depth. While many questions remained intact, the updated survey featured an extended section on CSE awareness and understanding, including discussions on the definition and a real CSE scenario. In the section of the survey aimed at adults (over 25 years old), we added questions on recognising the signs of CSE in young people who are being sexually exploited.

Numbers of respondents throughout the consultation and survey version used:

| Consultation session | Young people (up to 25 years old) | Adults (over 25 years old) | Survey used |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| December 2016: | 205 | 26 | Initial survey |
| March 2017: | 182 | 6 | Updated survey |
| July 2017: | 141 | 17 | Updated survey |
| August 2017: | 114 | 34 | Updated survey |
| Total: | 642 | 83 | |

Demographics of survey participants

The young people who responded were primarily aged 18 or younger: out of 642 respondents, 90% (576) of young people were 18 or younger and 10% (66) were aged 19-25.

22% (142) of young people who responded to the survey identified as White (including White British, White Irish, White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other White), 72% (461) identified as a Black or Minority Ethnic and 6% (39) of young people did not answer this question.

The majority of young people who responded identified as female (62%; 397) and 36% (228) identified as male. 1% (4) preferred not to say.

5.1. Views on Safety

Young people

This section of the survey was designed to ascertain how safe young people felt in public places like shopping centres, and how they identify risk. **Approximately 1 in 4 young people (23%; 144 out of 633) reported that they had felt intimidated or scared or made to feel uncomfortable by someone, while in shopping centres.**

Reasons included:

- being followed,
- sexual harassment (grabbing, touching and making comments),
- being approached by big groups of people, and people taking photos and people staring.

Comments from young people include:

“Groups of guys coming up to u and following u around even if you say no, and making sexual comments to you.”

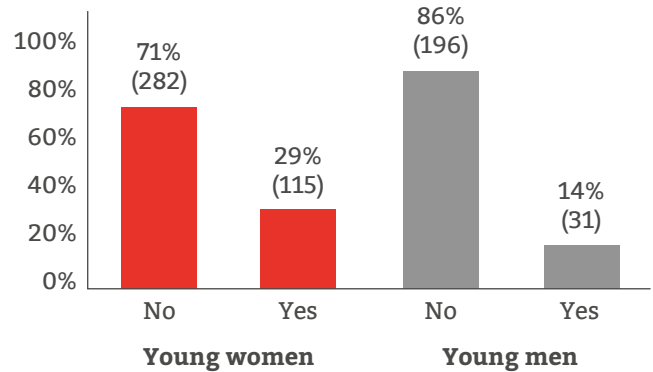
“Security and their attitude.”

“Group of guys. They approved me and try to get my number.”

“Hearing there’s been stabbings and people being injured.”

There were 83 adult respondents. 36% (28) identified as male, 61% (47) identified as female and 3% (2) who preferred not to say. 73% (61) were aged 26 to 45 and 27% (22) were aged 46 or over. 57% (61) identified as White and 43% (22) identified as Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

Have you ever felt uncomfortable, intimidated or scared here?



When looking at responses by gender, our findings showed that almost one third of young women (29%; 115 young women) answered that they had felt uncomfortable, intimidated or scared. This compares to approximately one in six young men (14%; 31 young men).

Response breakdowns suggest that being younger is also a vulnerability factor with 25% (98) of young people aged 18 or under feeling unsafe, in comparison to 15% (10) of those aged 19-25.

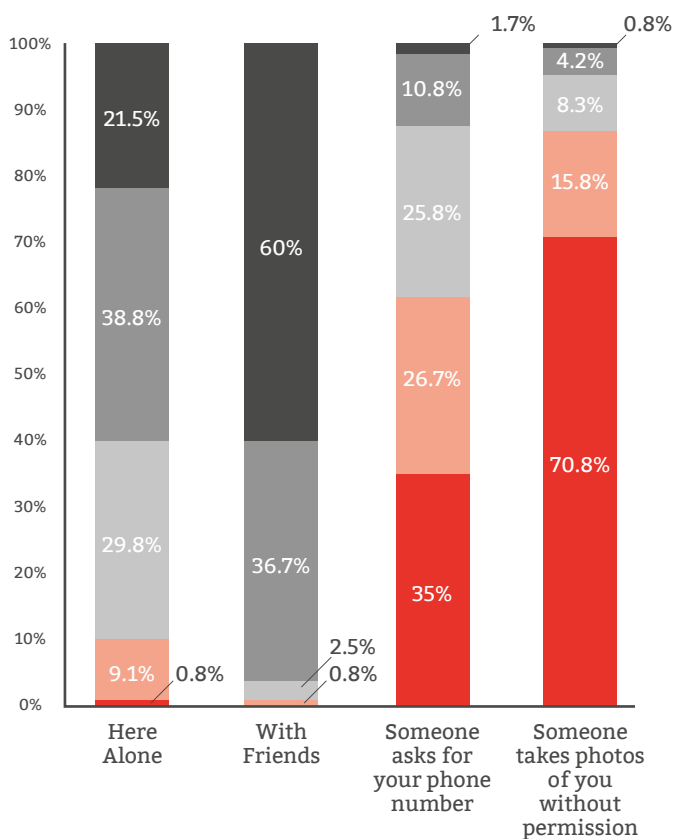
“Mostly young females said that sometimes they didn’t feel safe in the shopping centre. Generally they talked about older boys being loud and dominant, not necessary aggressive but it made them feel vulnerable.” [Peer Advisor]

In the initial survey (205 respondents) young people were also given different scenarios and asked how safe they would feel on a 1-5 scale in each scenario.

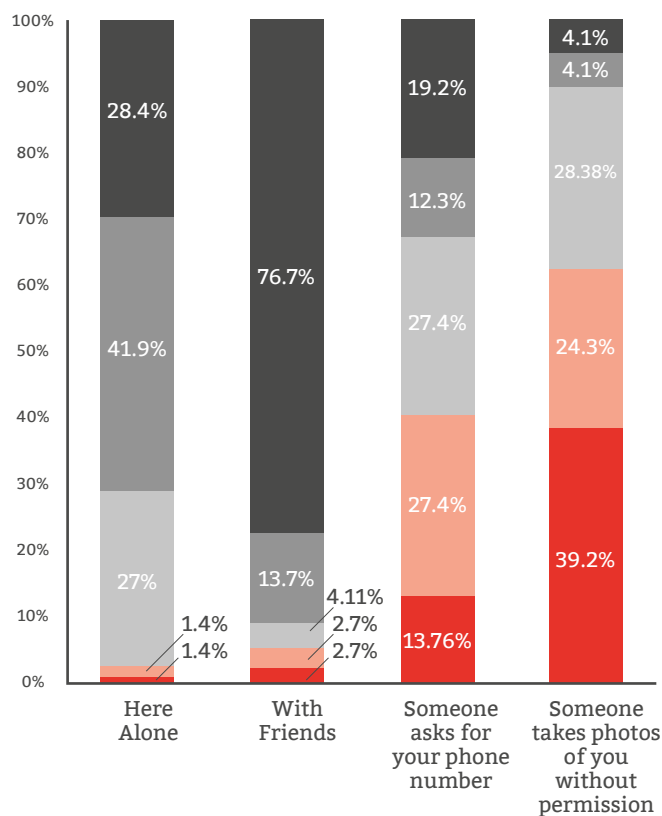
Young people felt generally ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ in shopping centres when with their friends, however felt unsafe should people start approaching them. This was the case for both young men and young women, however young women reported greater levels of feeling unsafe than boys, with **approximately 10% of young women stated they would feel unsafe or very unsafe if they were in shopping centres alone in comparison to 2.70% of young men.** 87% of young women reported they would feel unsafe or very unsafe if someone took their picture or started filming them without permission in comparison to 64% of young men. See the graph below for further breakdown.

Peer Advisors also asked young people if they thought certain groups of people might be more at risk than others in public spaces, like shopping centres. **Young people, particularly young women and girls, were most commonly identified as groups of people who were less safe. There was also reference to groups of young men and gang members and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds being less safe in shopping centres.**

Young women’s feelings of safety



Young men’s feelings of safety

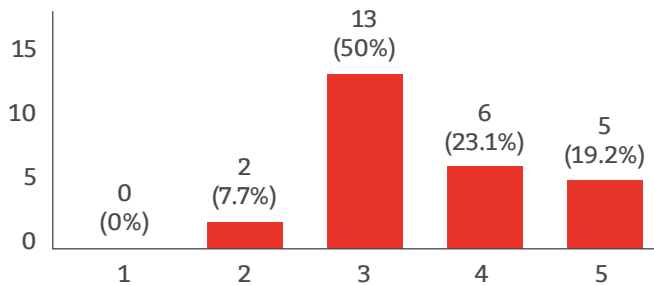


Very safe Safe Neither Unsafe Very unsafe

Adults

In the first version of the survey, adult participants were asked about their opinion on young people's safety in shopping centres in general.

How safe do you young people are in the shopping centre on a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being the safest?



Two in five adults stated that shopping centres were either 'safe' or 'very safe' for young people, and only two participants thought that the shopping centres were unsafe. 58% of adults recognised that young people were at risk from other young people in shopping centres.

Young people reported that because of hearing about incidents of CSE or harassment in shopping centres and other public spaces, their parents or friend's parents, would not let them go to shopping centres on their own.

5.2. Awareness and views on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Young people

54% (340) of young people said they had heard about CSE before (626 responses) with a greater percentage of young women 59% (225) reporting they had heard about it before than young men 49% (110).

When asked to give a definition, young people gave a range of answers. The most cited being:

- Adults hurting children,
- sexual violence, images (nudes) on the internet,
- people taking advantage of others, and
- women and girls being exploited and men and boys being perpetrators.

Comments from young people included:

"A guy can approach a girl with compliments and can use the girl to get his own way."

"When you feel intimidated and someone tries to touch you in a sexual way."

"Girls are pressured by boys and forced to take pictures etc."

"When young people made to do sexual things. Not consent."

*"Really really scary & it's not obvious to spot."
"Black mail a child to do things."*

"Children exploited for sexual things, don't know how to describe. By adults, could be by other young people too."

"Yeah I've heard of it before. It's accepted amongst young people and something that is common."

*"Some people are nice to others but then turn out not to be who they say they are
It can be commonly done online."*

"From internet, younger children groomed by paedophiles or anyone, could be the same age."

22% (140) of young people identified school as the place where they had heard about CSE before. Other common answers included the media (TV and online) and family, citing most often their mother.

Comments from young people included:

"Sometimes I see it. Guys approach young women in their cars and show them what they can give" them.

"Behind closed doors."

"My mum works in abortion clinic and she spoke to me about it."

Some young people blamed the young woman or joked about the issues involved.

*“Some girls feel that they should just because they want it, but they should have self-respect.”
[Young person]*

“Some [young] people knew about CSE, some didn’t, some were serious about it, some were joking about it.” [Peer Advisor]

“I was surprised that some of them [young people] thought it [CSE] was taboo” [Peer Advisor]

With the updated version of the survey (437 respondents), we decided to explore these responses further. After asking the young person if they had heard about CSE before and what their understanding of it was, the Peer Advisors read out the following definition of CSE.

Definition: Child sexual exploitation is when a person under 18 is pressured into performing sexual acts. This often involves a stage of ‘grooming’, in which the young person might receive something such as protection, affection, money, a mobile phone, drugs, alcohol or clothes.

After reading the definition, Peer Advisors asked again if this was something young people were aware of happening.

When given the definition many more young people responded that they were aware of what Child Sexual Exploitation is; 73% (310) of young people responded yes to this question compared to 53% (226) initially.

Again there was a slightly higher percentage for young women (76%; 205) and lower for young men (68%; 102).

The Peer Advisors then read out a real life scenario and asked whether participants were aware of this happening, whether they believe the behaviour is okay and why, and how they think it would make young women feel. The scenario was as follows:

“There have been cases of young men filming other young people and asking them to name girls/young women and make sexual comments about them.”

68% (292) of young people told us they had heard of the above scenario or something similar, with many able to name specific YouTube videos.

“I was surprised that the majority of them [young people] knew about the YouTube videos” [Peer Advisor]

“Some took it as a joke and some of them felt ashamed and scared their parents finding out. They feel horrible. Happened to a girl in my school and she didn’t come in for months.” [Young person]

The vast majority of young people (89%; 380) we spoke to said they didn’t think that this behaviour was okay.

When asked why it was okay or not okay and how the young women named in the videos might feel, young people spoke of it having a negative impact on the young women’s feelings and health; of it being disrespectful and unethical; and the risks involved.

Comments from young people included:

“Because they’re being forced to do something they don’t want to.”

“Because practical jokes are sometimes not safe.”

“Dangerous, sticks for life, labels.”

“Exposing someone’s private life.”

“Because the people in the videos may feel depressed and embarrassed.”

“The girl consented and trusted the boy and the boy abused that.”

“Not nice to do & can ruin people’s lives.”

“Wouldn’t like it the other way round and it’s a deformation of character.”

“Slut shaming should not be a thing it’s not anyone business.”

"Because they shouldn't be taken advantage of and it makes people fear for their safety and feel scared."

"Disgusting how it's demonising woman and abuse of trust as well as immature."

"Embarrassing them is wrong - they can become targets."

The Peer Advisors then asked 'How do you think the girls named in these videos feel?'

Comments from young people included:

"Embarrassed and like it's their fault."

"They feel horrible. Happened to a girl in my school and she didn't come in for months."

"They had to move schools."

"Upset and betrayed."

"Offended."

"Cheated and scammed."

"Like they've been wrongly accused and labelled."

"Suicidal, upset."

"Embarrassed because everyone can see it."

"Embarrassed ashamed and scared to go out."

88% (376) of the young participants acknowledged that young women singled out in these videos might be in danger or at risk. Young men were less likely to identify or address the risk, with 15% (22) of the young men saying the girls named in the videos were not in danger in comparison with 8% (23) of the young women. Some participants were able to identify how specific risks might impact a young woman, for example they spoke about young women's personal details, such as address, being exposed during the video.

Comments from young people included:

"Upset and unprotected because of addresses being told."

"Young women's lives would in danger because their personal details were exposed."

"They can become targets."

A number of young people identified the long term consequences this can have on the young women, including the risk of committing suicide.

Comments from young people included:

"Because it's rude and it's not good to expose people because they could get bullied and kill themselves."

"It's wrong and immature. It can also destroy a person's life."

"Need to change name."

"It's the end of the world for them."

"One young woman I spoke to said that if her ex was talking about her in a sexual way online her parents would 'kill her'. I think most parents would be angry at their child first before the person making the remarks, I see it as misplaced anger." [Peer Advisor]

Some young people talked about the manipulation involved:

"Brainwashed to think it's not bad but then can't get out of it when they realise it is bad."

"Some felt happy because they got famous and others were ashamed."

The minority of young people who said that this behaviour was okay, still acknowledged the negative impact that these videos can have on an individual.

Comments from young people included:

"They're disgusting and inappropriate."

"I think they're rude it's not nice to expose someone."

"Not bad as is for entertainment."

"It's entertaining and bad."

"As it is entertainment, but invading someone's privacy."

"Sometimes it funny then sometimes it's not good because it makes people uncomfortable."

Adults

80% (65) of participants said they had heard of CSE before. Often adult understanding of CSE related to child abuse or adult perpetrators rather than peer-on-peer abuse. Some highlighted that they had read about it in the media and mentioned online grooming:

Comments from adults included:

"Adults taking advantage of young friends."

"People pose as someone safe to lull into false sense of security."

"That young people are groomed and lured online."

"Normally through chat rooms."

"Through watching three girls. Parents letting their children in that situation."

"Romford Birmingham exploiting young girls."

"A lot of kids are growing up on their own and are being exploited by older men."

"That it happens more than we know."

"I think now it's different with social media than when I was growing up."

During a session, an adult participant disclosed experiences of CSE, and a Safer London Safeguarding Specialist was able to provide support and signposting to appropriate services in a designated safe space.

The updated version of the survey (57 adult respondents) included a follow-on specific question to find out if adults were aware of CSE occurring between peers. 84% (46) said they had. Peer Advisors also showed adult participants a Safer London information leaflet which describes the signs and behaviours generally seen in sexually exploited young people. 92% (52) of participants reported that they found the information leaflet useful.

Adult participants were also asked if they thought they could spot the signs of a young person being sexually exploited. Less than half 44% (24) of adults who answered this question said yes, 31% (17) were unsure and 24% (13) said they wouldn't be able to spot the signs.

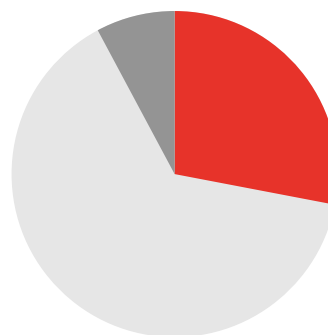
Comments from adults included:

"I could if a younger girl is with someone older."

"If it were my son I would see the change in his behaviour [if he was experiencing CSE]."

Over a quarter of adults who responded to the survey said they had seen something in this shopping centre that would make them think that a young person is at risk of CSE.

Have you ever seen anything in this shopping centre that would make you think a young person is at risk of CSE?



■ I've never thought of it 7% (6)

■ Yes, 28% (23)

■ No, 65% (53)

Participants most frequently voiced concerns about girls and young women being sexually harassed.

Comments from adults included:

“Young women being approached by groups of males in a really inappropriate way.”

“Young girls touched in sexual ways by older young people.”

“Worried about toilets, young boys going in girls’ toilets.”

“A modelling scout.”

However their responses also revealed some victim-blaming attitudes (towards victims or young people in general) in the shopping centres.

Comments from adults included:

“Some young women come to the shopping centre really tarted up. I just saw one up there with her clothes and make-up.”

“Young people need to be street savvy.”

“Groups and gangs on phones.”

“Everyone is in groups.”

5.3. Help-seeking behaviour

This section of the questionnaire was designed to ascertain what young people would do were they to feel at risk.

In the initial survey, Peer Advisors gave young people the following scenarios and asked what they would do if:

- (a) someone makes comments that make you feel uncomfortable
- (b) someone starts following you

In general young women were more likely to seek help than young men across all scenarios, either by:

- texting or calling someone they know like a friend or parent,
- talking to staff at the centre or going into a shop, and
- finding security or leaving the area.

Young men were more likely to either confront the person, carry on what they were doing or ignore the person.

Two further scenarios were provided to young people in both surveys:

- (a) What would you do if someone makes sexist or sexual comments about you?
- (b) What would you do if someone took pictures or started filming you in a shopping centre?



What would you do if other young people said inappropriate or sexual things to you or one of your friends?

| | Young women | Young men |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Leave the area | 34% (132) | 27% (61) |
| Confront the person | 29% (110) | 36% (81) |
| Carry on what you are doing | 16% (63) | 14% (32) |
| Ignore | 14% (55) | 12% (26) |
| Text or call a friend/parent | 8% (32) | 4% (8) |
| Talk to shop staff/go into a shop | 5% (18) | 3% (6) |
| Find Security | 9% (36) | 5% (12) |
| Police | 3% (11) | 1% (3) |

The reported behaviour of young women and young men differed in that more young women would leave the area than young men, whereas more young men would confront the person than young women. Young women were more likely than young men to seek help from security or the police, especially for the second question: 14% (55) of the young women who answered said they would find security in comparison to only 7% (15) of the young men.

The response with the largest gender difference was about leaving the area, with around one in three young women saying they would leave the area in both scenarios, in comparison to one in four young men.

One male respondent acknowledged the difference he thinks it makes being male:

“Laugh it off- a lot to do with guys, if I was a girl I would be creeped out.” [Young man]

A minority of young people who responded said they would seek help from friends, parents or shop staff, or ignore the behaviour across both scenarios.

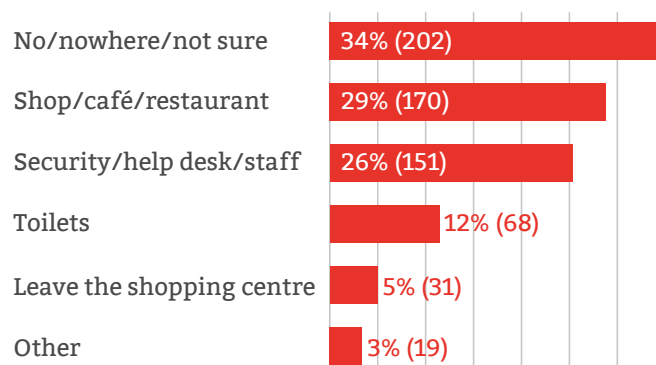
Peer Advisors also asked whether there was a space that young people felt they were able to go should they feel unsafe. **Over one third (34%, 202) of young people said there was nowhere they would go to if they felt unsafe in the shopping centre.**

What would you do if someone took pictures or started filming you here?

| | Young women | Young men |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Leave the area | 34% (133) | 27% (61) |
| Confront the person | 46% (179) | 51% (115) |
| Carry on what you are doing | 6% (24) | 6% (13) |
| Ignore | 6% (24) | 4% (10) |
| Text or call a friend/parent | 6% (25) | 4% (8) |
| Talk to shop staff/go into a shop | 3% (10) | 1% (3) |
| Find Security | 14% (55) | 7% (15) |
| Police | 8% (33) | 3% (7) |

One third said they would go in to a shop if they felt ‘unsafe’, such as McDonalds, as they believed they would be able to get help there, or shops where friends or relatives worked.

Is there somewhere in this shopping centre you would go to if you felt unsafe?



Comments from young people included:

“Somewhere by myself or hide.”

“Concierge where there are people and staff.”

“No specific place.”

“To the lego store because my cousin works there.”

| | Young women | Young men |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| No/nowhere/not sure | 32% (123) | 33% (74) |
| Shop/café/restaurant | 31% (122) | 21% (46) |
| Security/help/desk/staff | 23% (89) | 27% (61) |
| Toilets | 14% (53) | 6% (13) |
| Leave the shopping centre | 3% (13) | 8% (17) |
| Other | 2% (8) | 5% (11) |

More young women reported they would go to the toilet (14%; 53) or to a shop/café/restaurant 31% (122) in comparison to young men, of whom 6% (13) would go to toilets and 21% (46) to a shop/café or restaurant.

Only one in five young people said they would go to a helpdesk, find security or a member of staff, and young men were more likely to try to seek such support. One of the Peer Advisors highlighted the risks related to these responses:

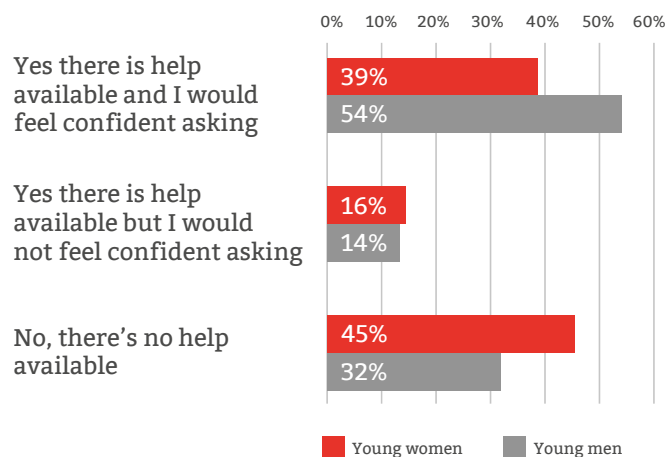
“Many [young people] said that if they feel unsafe they would go to the toilets or a store, or somewhere more crowded, but that doesn’t mean that they’ll be safe cause they’re not telling anyone or asking anyone for help, so they go somewhere else but no one knows you’re in trouble.” [Peer Advisor]

Survey question: **Do you think there is help available here for young people?**

Peer Advisors asked young people if they thought there was help available for young people in shopping centres. While the majority of young people answered yes, there was a gender difference in answers: 59% (221) of girls responded by indicating that there is help available for young people in shopping centres in comparison with 67% (147) of boys.

In the updated survey we asked young people whether they would feel confident in asking for help. 39%, almost two in five young people said they did not feel that there was help available to them. 15% said there was help available but they wouldn’t feel confident asking should they need it (**54% combined think they would not be able to access support**). Again there was a clear difference in this view between girls and boys (felt there is no help available).

Do you think there is help available here for young people? If so would you feel confident asking for help?



Comments from young people included:

“There should be young people help young people because they would be able to open up more.”

“It would be hard to disclose something that personal to strangers.”

“Victim blaming so kids would not be able to talk to anyone.”

“Only help if there is going to be a fight.”

“Yeah there is help but could be more awareness raised.”

“I would feel more confident speaking to my friends about it rather than strangers.”

Some of the barriers raised in seeking help included fear of police and stereotypes against young people.

Comments from young people included:

“Because young children these days are judged and now they fear to ask for help.”

“No because no young person wants to talk to police.”

“People feel intimidated by the police and security and see them as enemies - specifically young people feel this way.”

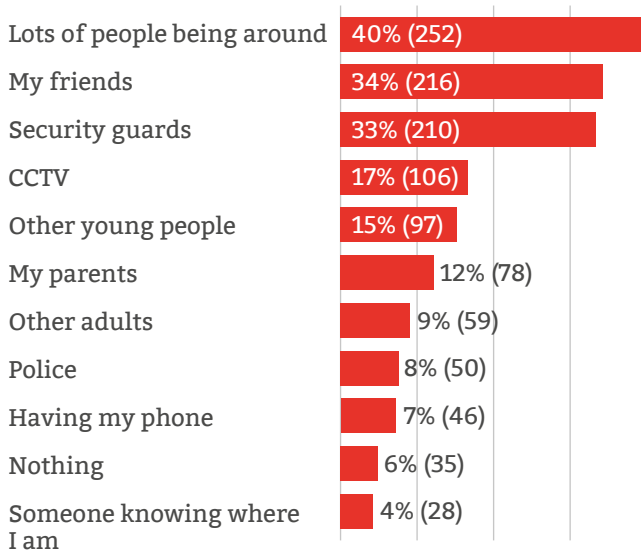
5.4. Improving safety

Young people

Peer Advisors asked young people what made them feel safe in shopping centres.

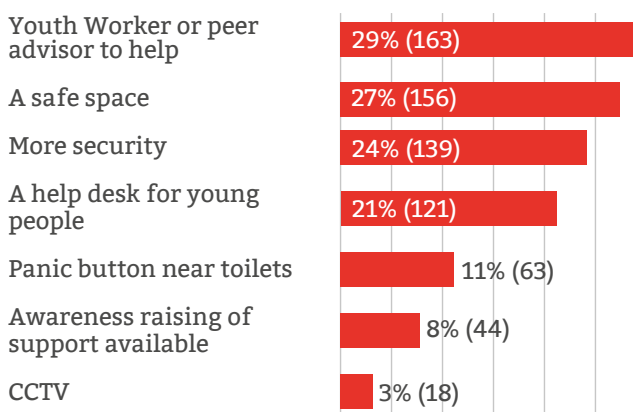
The answer most gave was lots of people being around followed by being with friends and having security guards around.

What makes you feel safe here?



Across all outreach sessions our Peer Advisors asked young people what they thought would make shopping centres safer.

What do you think could make shopping centres safer for young people?



More than one in four young people identified that having a Youth Worker or Peer Advisor or safe place to go to was important, and 21% said a helpdesk for young people.

The breakdown by gender revealed that, proportionately, male participants rated having a Youth Worker or Peer Adviser more highly than female respondents, who asked more often for a safe space or a help desk for young people.

One in four young people said more security would make them feel safer.

Comments from young people included:

“Security has to be less suspicious and more welcoming.”

“Approachable security guards.”

“Better security.”

“Security guards were more friendly and welcoming and present.”

“More professionals whose job it is to help young people.”

“Places being welcoming.”

“Leaflets with information for young people if anything happens.”

A recurring theme in the responses was that young people don't always feel welcome in shopping centres and a space specifically for them would make them feel safer.

“Older generation looking at us in a certain way just because we are young.” [Young person]

In the initial survey, participants were asked who they would want to be available should they need help/feel unsafe. Over one third said they would like security staff and 1 in 5 said they would like the police to be available if they were in trouble.

Approximately one third responded saying they would like to see a Youth Worker and 4% said they would like to be able to seek support from a Peer Advisor, other young person or friends.

With the new survey, Peer Advisors directly asked 'Do you think having youth workers for young people to speak to in shopping centres is a good idea?'

93% (391) of young people who responded said they thought it would be a good idea

Comments from young people included:

"They're around our age so more approachable and understanding."

"After school young people congregate here and no one understands them but young people will be able to relate."

"Because the youth workers are young and can relate so they have authority to solve the problem."

"I think people feel more safe because we are the same age and it will be more comfortable."

"They have people that are experienced and can give good advice."

"Because if they have problems, they can get it dealt with immediately and would still feel comfortable in staying and enjoying their experiences."

"Because it just reassured them that they are safe and can be helped."

"Because they can talk about their experiences to comfort you and show that they can help/have been through it before."

Some young people mentioned in their response potential barriers to having youth workers in shopping centres.

Comments from young people included:

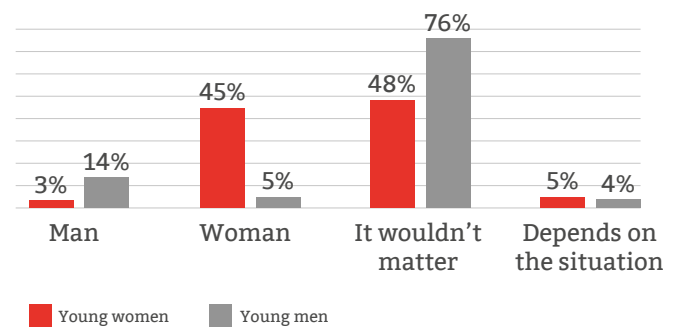
"Might not feel comfortable speaking in a busy place."

"Most people don't talk to friends so why would I talk to a stranger."

"A lot of young men won't go. But girls will."

Peer Advisors asked all young people whether the gender of the person they spoke to when seeking help was important. The majority (54%, 338) of all young people responded that gender was not important; with half as many saying that they would prefer a woman (27%, 270).

Would you prefer to speak to a man or a woman if you needed help?



Safer London's survey found that when divided by gender, **almost half (45%) of female respondents said they would prefer to speak to a woman.**

Comments from young people included:

"Because feel more comfortable talking about sexual stuff." [Female participant]

"[Women] Understand more." [Female participant]

"Because they [women] won't judge." [Female participant]

"Just because there is some stuff you can talk to women about." [Female participant]

"Women will think it's a joke and won't understand." [Male participant]

"It would be awkward speaking to a man." [Male participant]

Peer Advisors also asked if there was anything else that would matter to them when speaking to someone who could help them, such as the age.

In terms of the age of the person, 31% (131) of young people said they would prefer to speak to another young person, and 19% (78) said they would prefer to speak to an adult.

Comments from young people included:

"Adults don't see things from a young person's perspective."

"Young person, can relate to them more."

"They just have to listen."

"Someone who believes what we say and is relatable."

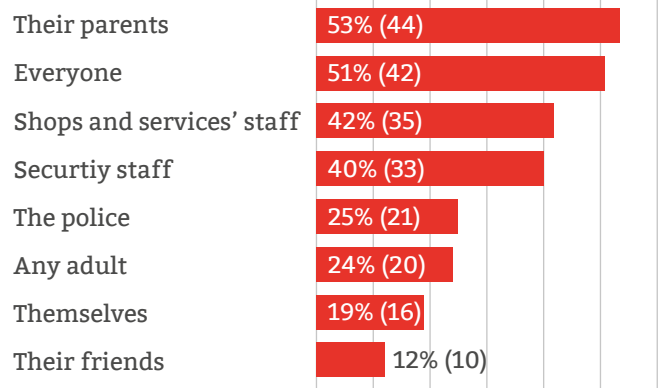
"Person that experienced it or knows what to do."

"Approachable and trustworthy."

Adults

The majority of adults said that they think it is the parents' responsibility to keep young people safe in shopping centres, despite most young people coming to public spaces alone or with their friends. This highlights a lack of awareness, that it is everyone's duty to safeguarding young people and a need to raise awareness about safeguarding in public spaces. Half of adult participants felt that it should be everyone's responsibility to keep young people safe.

Whose responsibility do you think it is to keep young people safe in this shopping centre?



How do you think the public could help young people at risk of CSE?

Most respondents said they could alert security and be vigilant, but many participants also said they would not feel comfortable intervening.

Comments from adults included:

"Report it to security."

"Keeping an eye out."

"Being open minded and aware. Being able to notice."

Some participants did not feel comfortable intervening and said many people were hesitant to get involved.

Comments from adults included:

“If direct harassment one can intervene but otherwise no.”

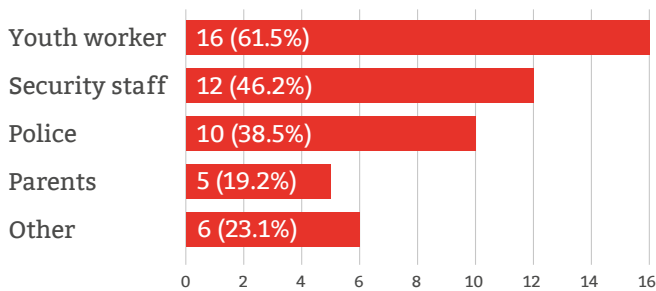
“Alert the authorities. But often you don’t know if it’s a group of young people bullying each other you don’t want to raise a false alarm.”

“People nowadays don’t care about anyone else. People wouldn’t intervene if they were worried. In Japan they have people who have experienced exploitation walking the streets and engaging with people at risk”

“Need to be bolder and need to be given reassurance that it is okay to get involved. More community spirit”

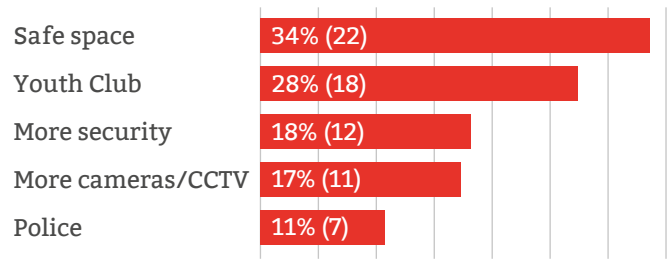
“If they notice something they should highlight it to security and report to the police. Should have emergency buzzers. Access points. Notices, signs, posters.”

Who do you think should be available for young people to get help here?



In the December 2016 sessions almost **3 adults in 5 responded that there should be a youth worker available** in shopping centres for young people to get help. In the updated version of the survey, we asked adults if they thought it would be a good idea to have Youth Workers for young people to speak to in shopping centres. 96% of adults (52) said they thought having Youth Workers in shopping centres is a good idea. We also asked what else could be done to improve young people’s safety in shopping centres.

What else do you think could be done in public spaces like this shopping centre to help people at risk of CSE?



Survey participants provided Safer London with suggestions on what could be done to help young people at risk.

Comments from adults included:

“A haven in each shop, if you’ve been assaulted you should be able to go to any shop and the staff needs to be trained to help.”

“A campaign for adults to be aware and maybe volunteer to be in shopping centres for adults and young people to talk to if they see something worrying.”

“More advice and information for carers.”

“You need a CSE person or drop in point in every shopping centre to report things, maybe write it on a leaflet and drop it in.”

Shopping centre staff

We conducted in-person and telephone surveys and used training session feedback from 21 members of staff from different shopping centres across London.

The majority of staff said that they had not received training on safeguarding young people as part of their role, and none of them had previously received CSE training.

Some staff members who received Safer London training as part of this project fed back that they would have liked the training course to be longer. In general, shopping centre staff felt fairly confident in intervening if they thought a young person was not safe with an average answer of 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being most confident).

"We need to catch the groomers." [Security Officer]

"Sensitive situation intervening as don't want to offend customers." [Security Officer]

We also had discussions with Security Officers who gave examples of how they had intervened prior to this project:

A security officer reported a case of a group of men approaching young women in the centre and harassing them. The intervention put in place was to have security staff approaching the men and disrupting them, and making this known to the whole team.

In a separate session, when we discussed how they could do more to protect young people from CSE or sexual harassment in the centre, one security guard said he would worry about making a point of this in case there was a complaint made about him and was worried he then would not have the support from management. His manager had been in the session and said he would always back him up in challenging that kind of behaviour.

In the following training sessions, we asked staff about barriers to intervention they may face if they thought that a young person was at risk of harm in a shopping centre, and what might improve young people's safety.

Comments from members of staff included:

"Security need to work with police."

"A local youth centre would support us help keep young people safe."

"Need more public education. Weak laws protecting young persons."

"Ban snapchat, instigators, monitor social media, parental regard."

After project completion, we contacted the Management Teams of each shopping centre to ask them about their experience of Safer London's project. Their feedback highlighted the importance placed by them on improving the safety and engaging with young people within their premises:

"Any kind of engagement with young people is important in a public setting and in Croydon in particular. We have a real situation with knife crime at the moment and this piece on safeguarding fits within a bigger piece of work with young people. This project and topic was very timely as working with young people and safeguarding is a current priority for the Local Authority." [Head of Operations, Croydon Town Centre Business Improvement District Ltd]

"Young people make up such a high proportion of the residents here, they come and shop with us and we want to provide a safe space and facilitate their experience and also show that we're working with other organisations so if a concern is raised or something happens they know that we can help." [Marketing Manager, The Mall, Walthamstow]

Feedback also highlighted a strong interest in continued engagement with young people in public spaces and developing training to ensure staff understand the issues behind CSE and how they can help young people:

“It would be very good to continue raising awareness and follow up with regular 6 months outreach sessions on the ground to keep engaging young people. It would also be very beneficial to continue the training possibly with other agencies operating in public spaces such as transport providers as they regularly engage with young people.” [Head of Operations, Croydon Town Centre Business Improvement District Ltd]

“Developing training for staff who work around the centre would be beneficial, at the moment most of our work involving young people is around gangs and we don’t have anything on sexual exploitation so it would be beneficial to raise awareness about this.” [Shopping Centre Security staff]

“I think this should be followed up, there’s going to be a report and we’re looking forward to this ,the feedback so far was interesting and we will use the findings for our safeguarding procedures, maybe look at whether we want to run this regularly, so it will definitely be used for our safety strategy.” [Marketing Manager, The Mall,Walthamstow]



6 summary

Overall Safer London's research found a concerning picture of young people feeling unsafe in public spaces in London, not knowing where to turn for help, and adults who felt unable to identify young people at risk from sexual exploitation. Fortunately, we were able to gather many ideas from young people and adults on how this situation can be improved.

Approximately 1 in 4 young people (23%; 144 out of 633) felt unsafe in some way while in the public spaces. Young women were more likely to have had these experiences (approximately 1 in 3 young women as compared to 1 in 6 young men).

54% of young people told us that they thought there was no help available in shopping centres, or if there was help available they did not feel confident they could ask for it. Over one third of young people did not think there was somewhere they could go if they were unsafe.

Some adults who participated in the survey held negative attitudes towards victims and young people in general. The responses also found that less than half felt able to identify young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation.

The young people we spoke to had fairly high levels of CSE awareness and understanding of its impact. They engaged in extensive conversations about how young people are put at greater risk due to exploitation via social media such as YouTube videos filmed in the centres, and talked about the damaging impact on young women's lives.

This raises the issue that while many young people are aware of CSE and potential risks facing them, they often do not know where to turn. One of the themes highlighted through our research was a distrust of staff; a feeling of not being welcome and a fear of not being listened to if help was sought.

It is therefore unsurprising that one of the most common things young people called for when asked about improving safety were 'safe spaces', hubs, or desks specifically for young people. Participants talked about having approachable security and staff, but also identified a need for Youth Workers or Peer Advisors who could support young people, who they would be more comfortable speaking to. For young women it was important that there were female members of staff available to talk to.

Adult participants echoed the suggestions of safe spaces, Youth Workers and public information, but also called for specific awareness raising, so that members of the public and shopping centre staff can feel more confident and empowered in intervening when they feel a young person is at risk.

7 recommendations

- **All staff in public spaces such as shopping centres should be trained in safeguarding, including how to respond to CSE.** This needs to go beyond the traditional security enforcement, and health and safety approach that currently exists.
- **Policies and procedures on safeguarding and CSE are needed in all shopping centres, including designated safeguarding leads and CSE champions.** This approach is also needed in other public spaces such as transport hubs, leisure spaces and parks. Staff must be trained to understand the importance of these policies and how to implement them.
- **All public spaces should have a designated and clearly signposted safe place for young people which they can go to should they feel unsafe or concerned.**
- **Places where young people, particularly young women, go to when they feel unsafe (such as cafés, shops or toilets) should have information readily available with details of safe spaces, advice and helplines.** Alongside this information, they should be reassured that security or local staff are trained and able to provide support.
- **Investment is needed so that the Youth and Voluntary Sector can have an in-person presence (either Youth Workers or Peer Advisors) in public spaces that can deliver outreach, including gender-specific support, developed in partnership with young people and relevant staff.**
- **Businesses operating in public spaces need to be engaged and encouraged to participate in the creation of safe spaces, working alongside and involving young people.**
- **A public awareness campaign is needed to build a better understanding of CSE and challenge some of the negative attitudes towards young people, especially young women.** The campaign should highlight that it is everyone's duty to safeguard young people, and that peer-on-peer abuse is a real concern in public spaces.

The toolkit will be available online at:

http://saferlondon.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/10/CSE_Toolkit.pdf

8 appendix: survey questionnaire

Young People's Safety Survey

Safer London is conducting a research on young people's safety in public spaces. Please answer this survey as honestly as you can, the information you share with us will be anonymised.

How old are you?

- Under 19 19-25 26-45 46 or over

Survey for people aged 25 or younger:

Feeling of safety

Have you ever felt uncomfortable, intimidated or scared here?

- Uncomfortable
 Intimidated
 Scared
 No

Comments (e.g. what happened)

Awareness of CSE

Have you ever heard about Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) before?

- Yes
 A bit
 No

What do you know about it?

Peer Advisor to read out the definition of child sexual exploitation:

Child sexual exploitation is when a person under 18 is pressured into performing sexual acts. This often involves a stage of 'grooming', in which the young person might receive something such as protection, affection, money, a mobile phone, drugs, alcohol or clothes.

Now you've heard this definition is this something you're aware of happening?

- Yes No

Comment

Where did you hear about this?

Peer Advisor to read out the following scenario: There have been cases of young men filming other young people and asking them to name girls/young women and make sexual comments about them.

Have you ever heard about this (or anything similar)?

- Yes No

Do you think that it's okay?

Okay No okay

Not sure

Comment (Why?)

How do you think the girls named in these videos feel?

Do you think the girls named in the videos might be in danger?

Yes No

Getting help

What would you do if someone started filming you here? (use answers as prompts)

- Leave the area
- Text or call someone I know
- Ignore and carry on what I'm doing
- Confront the person
- Get help from people around me (other young people)
- Get help from people around me (Strangers)
- Talk to a member of staff
- Get help from security
- Police

Other:

How would you feel?

What would you do if other young people said inappropriate or sexual things to you or one of your friends here? (use answers as prompts)

- Leave the area
- Text or call someone I know
- Ignore and carry on what I'm doing
- Confront the person
- Get help from people around me (other young people)
- Phone a helpline
- Get help from people around me (Strangers)
- Talk to a member of staff
- Get help from security
- Police

Other:

Do you think there is help available here for young people? If so would you feel confident asking for help?

- Yes there is help available and I would feel confident asking
- Yes there is help available but I would not feel confident asking
- No, there's no help available

Comment (why?)

Is there somewhere in this shopping centre you would go to if you felt unsafe? (use answers as prompts)

- A shop or a café
- The toilets
- Information desk
- Security
- No
- Not sure
- Other:

Improving safety

What makes you feel safe in this shopping centre? (use answers as prompts)

- Police
- Security guards
- My friends
- My parents
- Other young people
- Life skills workshops
- Other adults
- CCTV
- Having my phone
- Someone knowing where I am
- Lots of people being around
- Nothing

Other:

What do you think could be done in the shopping centre to help young people if any of the things we've spoken about happened to them? (use answers as prompts)

- Youth workers
- Chill out area
- Help desk for young people
- Places being welcoming
- Panic button near toilets
- Information about support around the shopping centre

Other:

Comment

Help for young people

Do you think having youth workers for young people to speak to in the shopping centre is a good idea?

- Yes No

Comment (Why?)

Would you prefer to speak to a man or a woman if you needed help?

- Man
- Woman
- It wouldn't matter
- Depends on the situation

Comment

Is there anything else about the person that would be important?

- Young person
- Adult
- Depends on the situation
- No

Other

Comment

Survey for people aged 26 or over:

Adult survey - Awareness of CSE

Have you ever heard about Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) before?

- Yes
- No
- A bit

If yes, what is your understanding of it?

Discussion about child sexual exploitation and peer advisor to read out definition (see above).

Does this sound like something you've heard before?

- Yes
- No

Were you aware young people can sexually exploit other young people?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Any comment

Please take a look at Safer London's flyer. It details the signs and behaviours generally seen in sexually exploited young people and includes numbers to call for help.

Do you think this kind of information is useful?

- Yes
- No

Do you think you could spot if a young person is being sexually exploited?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Have you ever seen anything in this shopping centre that would make you think a young person is at risk of CSE?

- Yes
- No

Never thought of it

Any further comment

Intervention

Whose responsibility do you think it is to keep young people safe in this shopping centre?
(use answers as prompts if needed)

- Themselves
- Their parents
- Their friends
- Security staff
- Shops' and services' staff
- The police
- Any adult
- Everyone

Other:

How do you think the public could help young people at risk of CSE?

Improving support available

Do you think having youth workers for young people to speak to would be useful in a shopping centre?

- Yes
- No

What else do you think could be done in a public space like this shopping centre to help young people at risk of CSE? (use answers as prompts if needed)

- Safe space
- More cameras/CCTV
- Youth club
- More security
- Police

Other:

Would you be interested to learn more about Child Sexual Exploitation and how to help keep young people safe?

If you would like to hear more from Safer London about this please enter your email address

Additional questions for members of staff

Did you receive any training about safeguarding as part of your job here?

- Yes
- No

If yes, did it include anything about keeping young people safe?

- Yes
- No

If yes, did it include anything about Child Sexual Exploitation?

- Yes
- No

How confident would you feel in intervening if you thought a young person was at risk of CSE?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Any additional comment

Demographics - to be filled out by each respondent

What gender do you identify with?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Transexual
- Transgender
- Prefer not to say

What ethnicity do you identify with?

- White (including White British, White Irish, White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other White)
- Asian/Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian)
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (including African, Caribbean, Other Black)
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups (including White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Other Mixed)
- Other ethnic group (including Arab, Any other ethnic group)

Thank you for your time! Please hand the ipad back to the Peer Advisor.

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**Please call Safer London on 020 7021 0301
to make a referral to our services**

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