

Women's Safety Charter FAQ for businesses

1. What is a Women's Safety Charter?

Southwark Council takes women's safety seriously. That's why we are tackling it head on, with a proactive approach that will really make a difference and why we have become the first council in the country to appoint a deputy cabinet member for women's safety.

Southwark Council has carried out a wide consultation exercise speaking with people who live, work and socialise in the borough. They have told us that women being sexually harassed in nightclubs, bars and pubs is an issue which affects their quality of life. Women also disclosed that if a man groped them in a club, they would not complain to a member of staff. Southwark's Women's Safety Charter lays out some principles for licensed venues setting out how they will support victims of sexual harassment in their premises.

2. Why is the Council taking this initiative?

Our consultation has told us that female sexual harassment at bars and night clubs is seen as normalised behaviour and goes unchallenged and unreported. Harassment can frequently be trivialised and women and men can feel that is not worth confronting; they should just 'get on with it'. The issue is particularly pertinent in a borough like Southwark, with a busy nightlife and three alcohol saturation zones.

3. What is the extent of the concern / How do we know this is a problem?

Low level sexual harassment is very rarely reported and therefore no reliable records exist of its prevalence, however there is a lot of anecdotal evidence. An important part of the women's safety charter development stage has been a borough wide consultation (or community conversation) on women's safety which has assisted us in having a clearer picture of how much these issues affect women.

4. Why have you chosen my premises?

We have already found some forward thinking businesses to become champions for this cause and pioneer the implementation of WSC in their premises (see below) but we are always looking to expand and looking for a mixture of clubs, bars, pubs and other premises licensed which sell alcohol.

5. Why should we get involved?

There are a number of benefits to having your business linked to this initiative:

- There will be extensive publicity and females in the borough will get to hear how your venue is a safe place for them to socialise and go out in. Your premises will be listed on the council's women's safety charter webpage. Here is a sample of the media coverage we have had to date:

Southwark Council is cracking down on sexual harassment in clubs:

<http://www.cosmopolitan.co.uk/reports/news/a32102/southwark-council-sexual-harassment-charter/>

Women's Safety Charter: London venues including Ministry of Sound sign up to council initiative to stop harassment at bars and clubs

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/womens-safety-charter-london-venues-including-ministry-of-sound-sign-up-to-council-initiative-to-stop-harassment-at-bars-and-clubs-9936983.html>

Women Safety Charter launched in London (online and broadcast)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-30568147>

London Council gets tough on bum pinchers: charter clamps down on nightclub harassment

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/12/18/london-council-gets-tough-bum-pinchers_n_6348310.html

Could this be the end of bum pinching in nightclubs? London council introduces zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment encouraging women to speak out
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2877704/London-council-introduces-zero-tolerance-policy-sexual-harassment-encouraging-women-speak-out.html>

Could bum pinching finally be on the way out of British clubs? (interview with Cllr Burgess)
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11296145/Could-bum-pinching-finally-be-on-the-way-out-of-British-clubs.html>

- Your premises will be a more relaxed and welcoming environment which will attract customers (particularly females).
- Your business will be contributing to making Southwark one of the safest London boroughs for women and it could assist your business to fulfil its corporate social responsibility policies.

6. We already care for our customers, why do I need to do more?

We would like to build on your good practice and utilise your staff's experience in knowing how to diffuse situations so that they do not escalate. You might already be going the extra mile to ensure women can relax and have a good time in your venue in the knowledge that reports of harassment will be taken seriously. The Women's Safety Charter will be a great way to let existing and would be customers know about this.

We are also offering free training for your staff on how to deal effectively with reports of harassment.

7. Won't it make my premises look as though it has problems?

There is a carefully thought through communications campaign to support the women's safety charter work. We have consulted with businesses like yourself to ensure the right messages go out at the right time.

Here's a copy of the posters we have co-designed with licensees, which are already being displayed in the venues who have signed up:

We want you to have a good night out.

We take women's safety seriously and believe harassment has no place on a night out.

As part of Southwark's Women's Safety Charter our staff are trained to help support you on dealing with these issues.

If you're feeling intimidated or threatened please talk to them so you can get on with having a great night.

We are signed up to the Southwark Women's safety charter. To find out more go to www.southwark.gov.uk/womenssafety

Southwark Council

Good Out

Fairer future
Create your future

www.southwark.gov.uk/womenssafety

9. What are the charter principles and what am I/ my staff expected to do if we sign?

Following consultation, the principles which we have agreed on are:

- Prominently display high visibility posters in the venue which discourage harassment and encourage reporting.
- To take every report of harassment and sexual intimidation seriously and take appropriate action.
- To take active steps to support persons who report harassment or sexual intimidation, which might take place on your premises.
- To train all front of house staff to address women's safety and harassment.
- To take active steps to ensure females leave the venue safely.

What we are hoping to achieve with the above is that women feel safe and comfortable in your venue, building on your good practice and utilising your staff's experience in knowing how to diffuse situations so that they do not escalate. Taking reports seriously can then translate into influencing customers who might not be behaving appropriately in a way that works for women and for you and your staff.

We will ask you to physically sign the charter, we will provide you with a copy for your records which you can display in your premises if you wish to do so. We will then provide you with a short training film (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMWA1aEq_qM) which you can show your staff at your convenience. The free training we are offering will ensure the charter works for you and your customers and a few months after the launch we will contact you to find out how the charter is working for you.

10. How much will this cost me?

If you sign up we anticipate the Women's Safety Charter initiative will have no financial cost to your business other than a few minutes at one of your staff team meetings to do some basic training by watching the WSC short film. All publicity materials i.e. posters will also be provided by the council free of charge.

11. How much staff time will this take up?

Just a short training session with your front of house team prior to the launch and subsequently it can be incorporated as part of your staff induction programme for staff who might be recruited further down the line.

12. How am I supposed to know what to do? This is a specialist area of work. We are not experts.

The principles in the charter are realistic and practical to implement, we hope that some or most of the things which will become part of the charter are common practice in your venue already. Part of the briefing session will include given leaflets of specialist organisations who offer support for people who have been a victim of crime including harassment.

13. How can we involve ourselves in customers' private affairs?

The type of sexual harassment this initiative is setting out to address is not a private affair, it happens in public, it is unsolicited, unwanted and often goes unchallenged because victims feel no one will take their reports seriously.

14. Who else is involved in the project with the council?

