

RIGHT TO THE CITY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How public spaces feel, how they function, and whether we truly feel welcomed has a profound impact on our sense of safety and belonging. For women, girls, and non-binary people, public spaces often feel like an afterthought in the design of our cities. As they move through our streets and spaces, women are frequently filled with fear, taking precautions at every turn: gripping keys between fists, walking quickly, avoiding eye contact, and choosing longer less direct routes to feel safer.

Right to the City is a live action research programme that explores how women, girls, and non-binary people experience public space in the City of London, particularly after dark, and how their voices can shape safer, more inclusive urban environments. It responds to a growing recognition that traditional approaches to safety fail to capture the spectrum of lived experiences of those who feel underrepresented in the City of London's public realm.

Publica Community and Research CIC is an urban research organisation dedicated to understanding how people use urban space and how cities can be designed to be more inclusive. This programme, funded by the City of London's Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) and supported by Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across the City of London, was developed in close collaboration with an Advisory Board of 41 stakeholders, including the City of London Police, the City of London Corporation, the Barbican, the London Museum, and a wide range of businesses and cultural organisations.

The programme was delivered across five wards — Farringdon Without, Aldersgate, Cripplegate, Cornhill and Portsoken. It engaged more than 320 participants through artist-led night walks, a Youth Design Challenge, and a final celebration event. These creative methodologies foregrounded lived experience and reimagined safety as the presence of joy, agency, and belonging.

The City of London presents a unique urban context: a globally significant financial centre with a small residential population and a dense, transient workforce. Despite low crime statistics, which make it one of the safest boroughs in the UK, many participants in Right

to the City reported feeling unsafe — especially in narrow streets and alleyways, poorly lit areas, and spaces lacking visible community presence. These perceptions and experiences are universal in our towns and cities. They are shaped by personal and collective histories of harassment, exclusion, and lack of visibility in public space. The project explores the gap between safety understood through crime statistics and perception of safety as a lived experience.

The common themes emerging across the project were:

PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

While official crime rates are low, participants described how their lived experience of the City is shaped by vigilance, avoidance and route planning. Women shared how their movements are constrained by fear and how they carry this fear in their bodies every day. Often, there is no forum where fear can be named, shared, or understood.

THE VALUE OF CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Sound, light, movement, masquerades and storytelling enabled participants to reclaim public space, shift perceptions, and build new, empowering memories of the City of London. These methods proved effective in surfacing emotional and sensory dimensions of safety often overlooked in policy.

PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY

Many women feel that the City's public spaces are not designed with them in mind. Lack of seating, poor lighting, and limited access to toilets intensify fear and heighten anxiety. Conversely, greenery, colour, and visible community presence foster a sense of belonging and care.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

An important realisation emerging from the project is the need to develop a Public Realm Inclusion Strategy for the City of London, that builds on the principles of equity, safety, inclusion and belonging to inform the development of public space design and management. The project revealed a strong appetite for continued collaboration on the theme of women's safety in the City. On page 6 we set out a series of practical recommendations that include establishing a Women's Safety Network, mainstreaming creative engagement in planning, protecting community spaces, and reviewing the City Plan 2040. There is also potential to pilot temporary interventions and develop new tools to benchmark progress on inclusion and safety. For the full list of recommendations see pages 66 -103.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's Safety Champions in City Businesses

Support cross-business sector networks to amplify women's voices and coordinate safety efforts and measurable solutions across the City of London's businesses.

Deliver training for businesses, cultural institutions and community groups

Roll out bystander intervention training and accreditation to empower staff to respond to harassment and unsafe behaviours.

Fund and implement creative community engagement programmes to inform safety at a local level

Support women-led creative programmes that reclaim public space through movement, play, and expression, empowering women to come together, share experiences and needs, and feel connected and visible in their communities.

Develop a Public Realm Inclusion Strategy

Create a Public Realm Inclusion Strategy for the City of London that embeds safety, equity, and belonging into public space design, planning and management, guided by the lived experiences of women and underrepresented communities in the City.

Enhance opportunities for rest and respite

Design spaces with seating, greenery, and water features to support relaxation and wellbeing for women and non-binary people.

Lighting

Improve lighting in underused areas with warm, playful illumination to enhance safety and joy after dark.

Audit hidden spaces to inform redevelopment

Identify and prioritise hidden urban spaces for inclusive redevelopment in the City Plan 2040.

Safe Havens as vibrant hubs

Reimagine Safe Havens as inclusive, well-maintained community spaces with programming that centres women's wellbeing.

Protect and invest in community spaces for young women and girls

Safeguard and enhance community spaces to ensure long-term access and support for young women and girls.

Develop grants for women safety interventions

Create targeted funding to co-design inclusive gathering spaces with young women and girls, moving beyond informal venues like fast food outlets.

Public Toilets, Conveniences Availability and Accessibility

Integrate accessible public toilets into development projects, extending availability into the evening and night-time.

Celebrate Women's presence in Public Space

Invest in public art and memorials that foreground women's stories, co-designed with women, girls, and non-binary people.

Streamline Communication and Resource Sharing to Keep Women, Girls, and Non-Binary People Informed

Consolidate communication channels to improve access to relevant information and resources across the City.

Foster City-Wide Partnerships to inform Women's Safety

Leverage the legacy and partnerships formed through Right to the City to build a formal Women's Safety Network to connect initiatives and ensure women have decision-making power in shaping their City of London.

Translate recommendations into tangible next steps

Develop an implementation plan and secure joint funding to ensure sustained commitment to women's safety.

Review the City Plan 2040

Conduct a study of the City Plan to identify pilot sites for gender-inclusive public space interventions.

Conduct temporary projects in the City

Implement co-designed temporary installations using light and sound to explore inclusive design.

Design a benchmarking pilot to measure impact

Partner with educational institutions to pilot creative tools for tracking inclusion, safety, and belonging in public spaces.

Right to the City demonstrates that safety is not just freedom from violence, it is also about accessibility, visibility, and the right to belong. By centring the voices of women, girls, and non-binary people, the recommendations provide a roadmap for gender inclusion and safety in public spaces. The City is in a great position to lead by example, embedding gender-inclusive design and creative engagement at the heart of its urban future.

INTRODUCTION

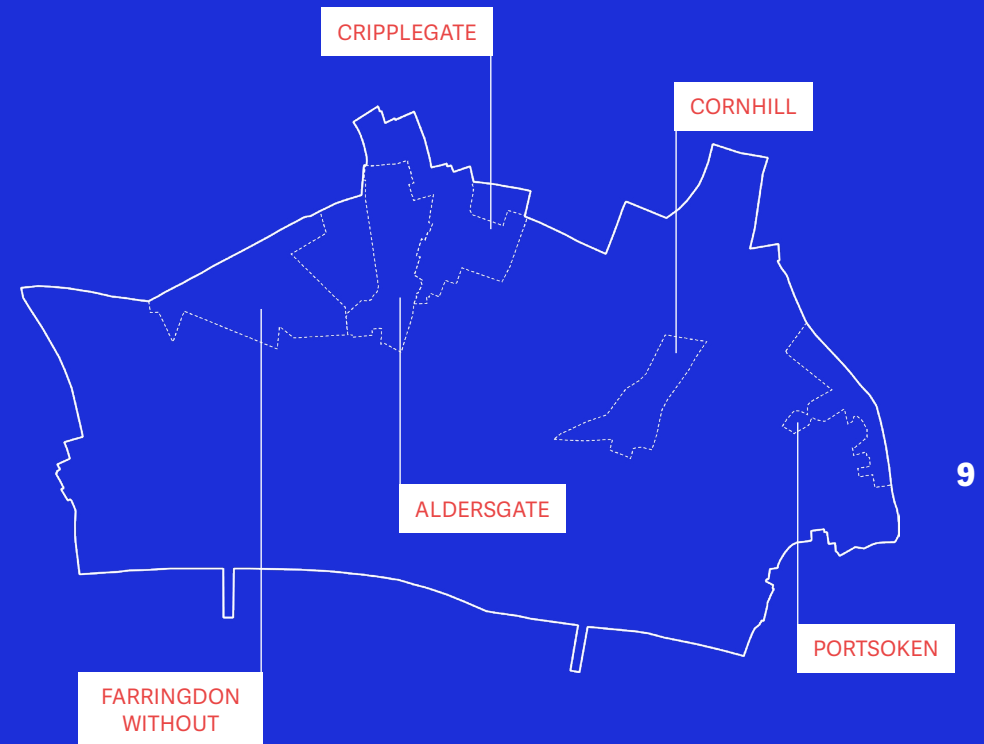
In August 2024 Publica Community and Research CIC was awarded Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) support from the City of London to carry out a live action research project focussed on researching and foregrounding the lived experiences, needs, and realities of women, girls, and non-binary people in the City of London.

We were appointed for our recognised expertise in gender-inclusive approaches to the public realm, with a particular focus on how women, girls, and gender-diverse people experience and navigate the built environment. This work builds on our established Campaign for Inclusive Cities and a growing body of local, national, and international projects, enabling us to bring a comparative and deeply informed perspective to inclusive urban design in the City of London.

8

In the past, the City of London has used CILNF funding to pioneer and support some important projects tackling issues of safety and inclusivity, for example the Safer City partnership to the development of a network of Safe Havens. Building on this legacy, and adopting experimental engagement approaches, Right to the City gathered the lived experiences and needs of women, girls and non-binary people in the City.

Led by Publica Community and Research CIC in collaboration with the City of London's local communities, Right to the City focuses on understanding women's experiences of the City after dark, and ultimately on creating inclusive, healthy, and accessible public spaces where women, girls and gender diverse people feel like they belong. Addressing these issues results in all users of the City benefiting from a more inclusive built environment.



(01) Map of City of London and wards of focus



(02) Soundscapes for Collective Reflection

A SHARED VISION

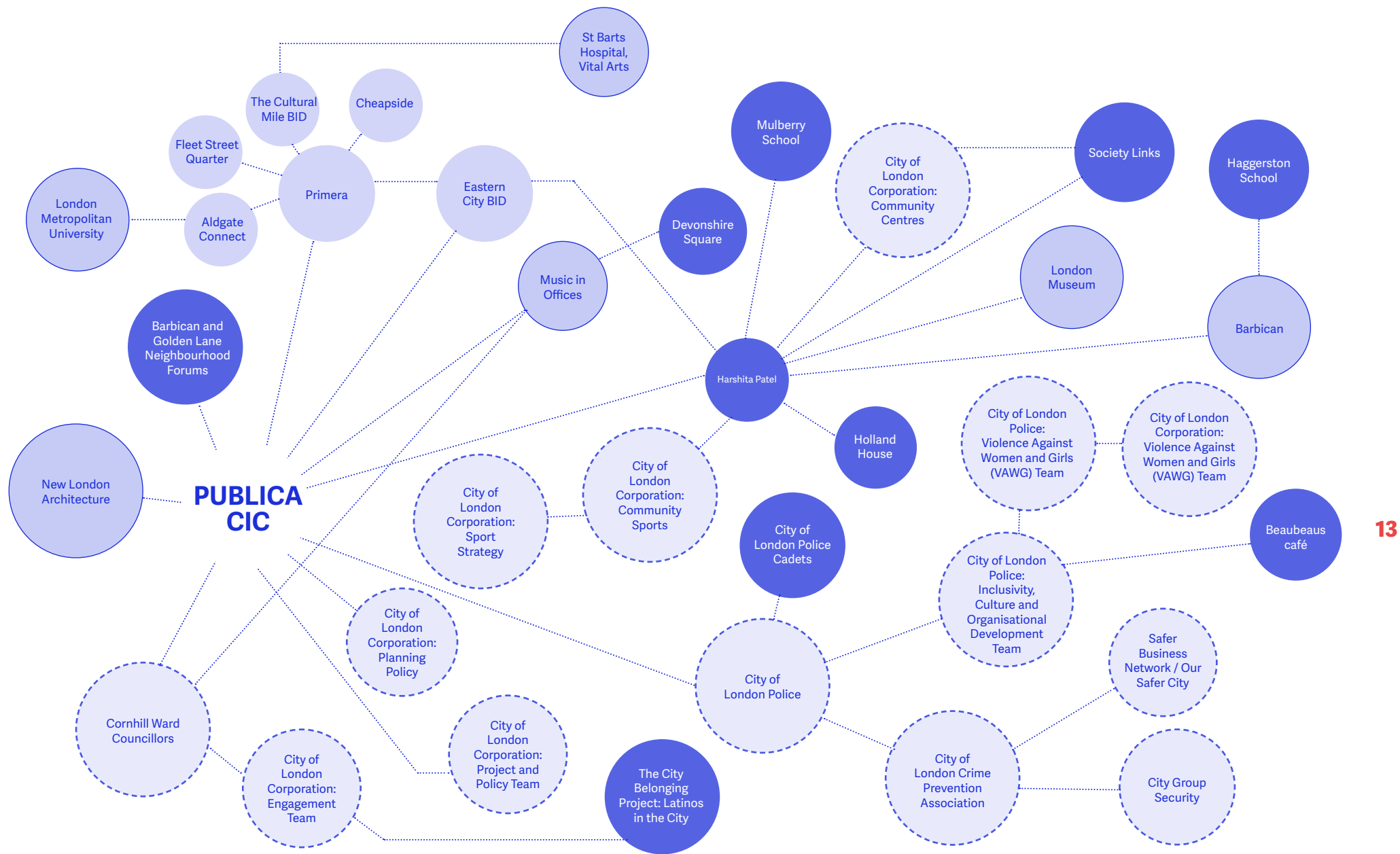
Working with a City-wide network of collaborators, this initiative unites the local intelligence of the City of London communities and cultural partners with the broader reach of institutional stakeholders to create a shared, community-driven vision.

Operating across five Wards in the City (Farringdon without, Aldersgate, Cripplegate, Cornhill and Portsoken) Right to the City has worked towards:

- 1 Improving feelings of safety and belonging for women, girls and gender diverse City of London's residents, workers and visitors
- 2 Making the City the first London authority to pilot an ambitious participatory initiative for women's safety in public spaces and support the City of London Police in their ambition to be one of the most inclusive police services in the country.
- 3 Creating an evidence-based capacity building for the City of London stakeholders to continue to work together, to feel more knowledgeable about the women, girls and non-binary people they serve, as well as committing to action together.

We aim to deliver on a fourth objective following this pilot:

- 4 Encouraging and supporting communities and policymakers across the rest of London and the UK to replicate such work through a set of open-access resources, lesson plans and workshop structures.



Since September 2024, Right to the City has built a network of 41 connections with stakeholders across the City of London. Some of these stakeholders became integral members of the Advisory Board, which has been actively involved throughout the project, meeting every two months to offer feedback, share insights, and bring diverse perspectives to the table. Their ongoing input has helped shape the project.

● POLICY PARTNERS
London-wide and City-based

● BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
CULTURAL COLLABORATORS

● Local Intelligence Delivery Partners

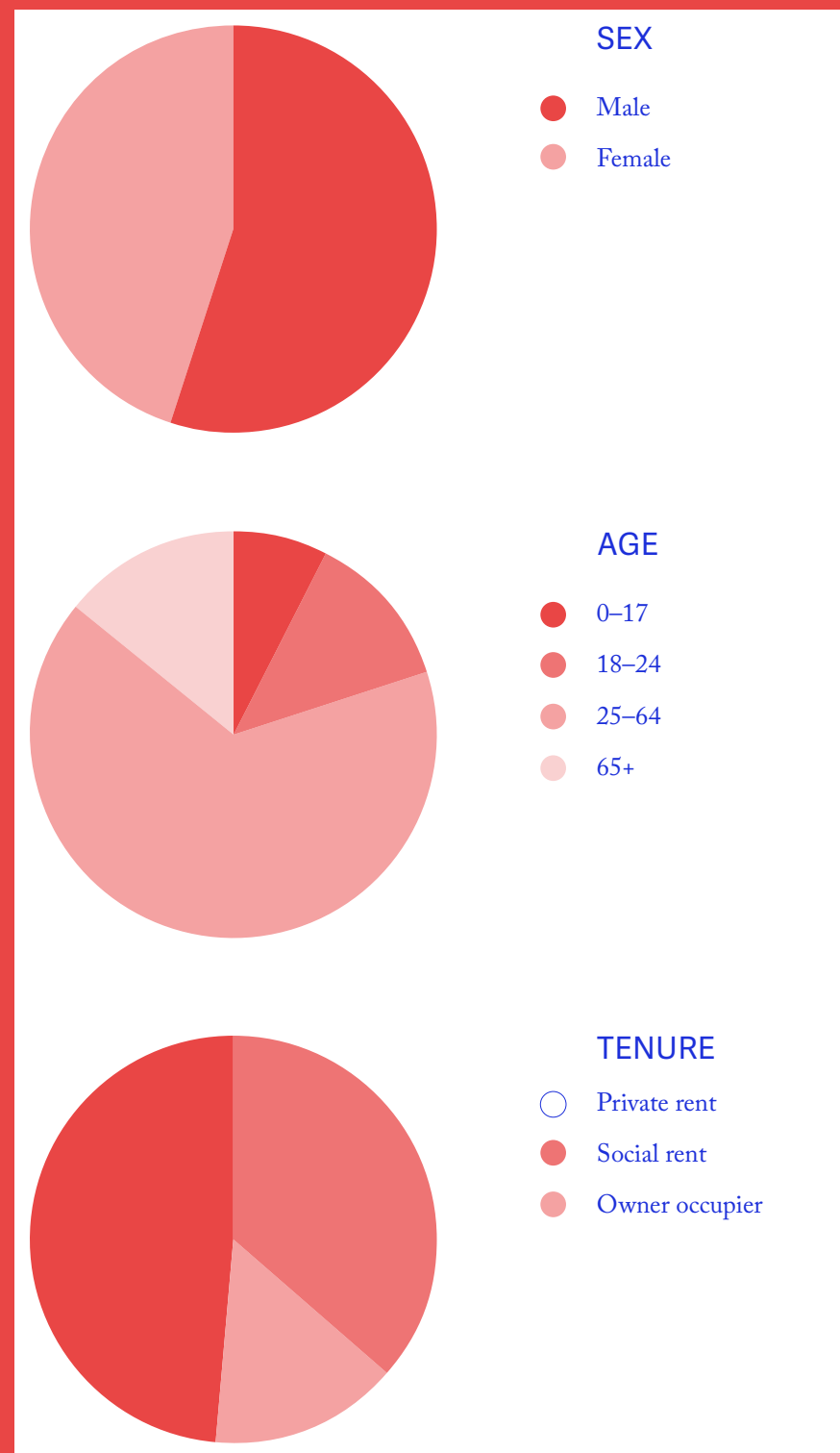
● CITY COMMUNITY GROUPS
Local Intelligence Delivery Partners

THE CITY OF LONDON

The City of London is the historic centre of London with the current boundaries of the City roughly aligning to those of Roman Londinium. Today, it is not only one of the largest financial centres globally but also one of the densest employment clusters in the world, hosting over 678,000 workers based in the Square Mile and representing 2.1% of all workers in the United Kingdom. Alongside its economic identity, there are ambitions to further strengthen the City's role as a tourist destination and cultural hub. Two of London's four UNESCO World Heritage sites are in or close to the City red-line boundary. Similarly, The City is home to cultural institutions including the Barbican, the London Museum and Guildhall, which are also contributing to the growth of the City's evening and weekend economies. The City is one of the best-connected parts of the country with six mainline railway stations, 12 underground and DLR stations and two Elizabeth Line stations, making it an easily accessible destination for visitors.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The City of London presents a unique and atypical demographic context within the wider London landscape, with an extremely high employment density and a very low residential population, of approximately 2,966 people per square kilometre. The City therefore falls within the 10% least densely populated areas of London, with more than half of the total population identifying as male and aged between 25 and 64. For every resident, 79 people work in the City of London. The workforce is notably younger and predominantly male, with a higher proportion of workers aged between 22 and 39.



CRIME STATISTICS

The City of London Police recorded 2,061 crimes in the twelve months between April 2024 and March 2025. 63% of these crimes were shoplifting, theft from the person or other theft representing the four most common crimes recorded. This was followed by violence and sexual offences, which accounted for 15% of incidents (302 offences). In 47% of all recorded crimes, no suspect has been identified following an investigation.

Statistically, these numbers make The City of London one of the safest boroughs in the UK. Yet, while crime rates are low, the gap between being safe and feeling safe is an important area for further investigation.

The people who are currently in charge of women and girls' safety in the City of London acknowledge that at the moment they have little understanding of the daily lived experiences of women and girls – and that Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a 'hidden phenomenon.' They say this is due to the fact that it is difficult for women and girls to report their experiences at the moment.

These characteristics make the City a uniquely complex and compelling environment in which to explore issues of safety and belonging, particularly for women, girls, and non-binary people. In response to this, Right to the City gave young women, girls and non-binary youth the opportunity to share their experiences in the City, and make suggestions about their vision for a safer, more inclusive, and joyful City.

500,000
visitors everyday

16

302
sexual offences

2,061
crimes April 2024–March 2025

17

WHAT WE DID

Running from September 2024 until July 2025, the Right to the City programme was active in the wards of Farringdon Without, Cornhill, Cripplegate, Aldersgate and Portsoken. These wards were selected as key sites of action due to the presence of established collaborators who were active in the area and connected to the local communities. Each ward also offered distinct urban contexts to be explored with women, girls, and non-binary people.

FARRINGDON WITHOUT

This ward provided a rich setting for investigating the area surrounding Smithfield Market, a site undergoing significant urban redevelopment with the emerging London Museum. The Rotunda public space at the heart of the area is a vital public amenity for local workers, residents and the community of St Bart's Hospital.

ALDERSGATE AND CRIPPLEGATE

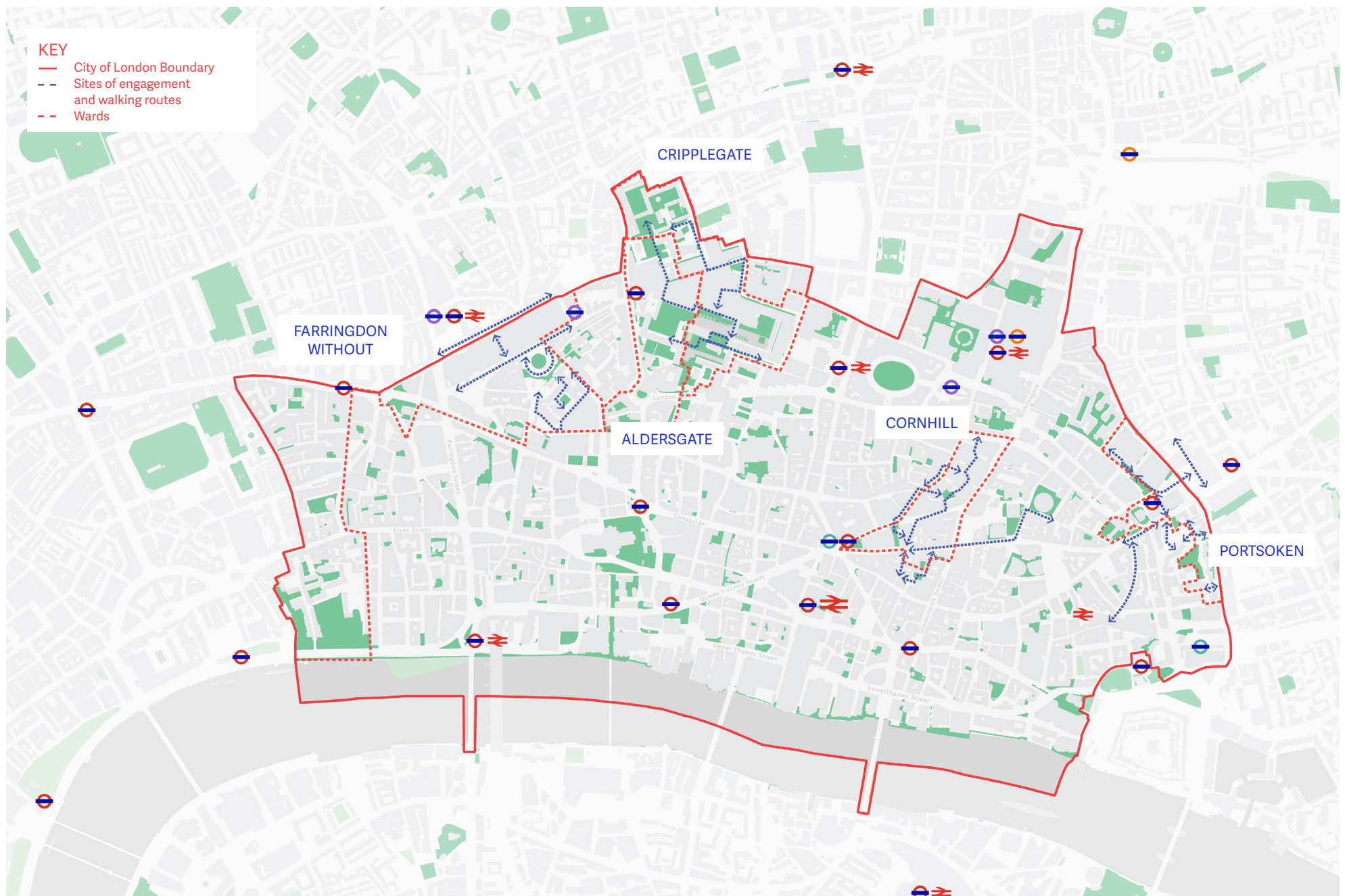
These adjacent wards enabled us to explore an urban environment linking the Golden Lane Estate with a network of open public spaces connecting the Barbican to St Giles Terrace. These spaces created opportunities to examine relationships between residential life and public access to green spaces and water.

PORTSOKEN

In this ward, we focused on the network of alleyways and pedestrian routes that thread through the area surrounding Aldgate station, forming the eastern edge of the City of London, bordering Whitechapel. Streets and alleyways explored included Artizan Street, Middlesex Street, Goulston Street, Blue Boar Alley, Little Somerset Street, Tenter Passage, and Crutched Friars.

CORNHILL

In Cornhill, the engagement focussed on navigating the network of medieval lanes and courts located within the historic and financial centre of London, revealing the layered spatial and social history of the ward. The spaces we focussed on included Birchin Lane, Finch Lane, Adam's Court, La Maternité Water Fountain, Bengal Court, St Michael's Alley, George's Yard, St Peter's Alley, and White Lion Court.



METHODOLOGIES AND KEY STRANDS OF WORK

Broadening the way we collectively think about and define safety in the City, the research methodologies adopted in Right to the City are grounded in a feminist philosophy of participation - one that affirms women's power to shape urban life.

These methodologies elevate and platform the voices of women and gender-diverse people, centre their testimonies, and create space for joyful, imaginative exploration of the City of London's public spaces. Rather than framing safety solely as the absence of harassment, violence, and intimidation, our approach redefines it as the presence of agency, joy, and belonging, enabling a shift from fear to possibility.

By foregrounding lived experiences, Right to the City moves beyond statistics, and quantitative data to uncover the emotional, sensory, and socio-cultural dimensions of safety in the City. These methods were tested through our public-facing programme, which included four artist-led women's night walks in March 2025, six youth design workshops held between March and May 2025, and a final celebration event in July 2025.

328

PARTICIPANTS

239

young women, girls and non-binary people engaged in the Youth Design Challenge

48

people engaged in the Artist-led Women Night Walks

41

organisations and collaborators partaking in Right to the City

ARTIST-LED WOMEN NIGHT WALKS

A programme of four artist-led Women Night Walks creatively explored the experiences and realities of women and non-binary people in the City after dark. Following an open call that attracted 60 applications from both local and international creatives, Publica commissioned four artists to each lead one walk. The artists selected were those whose proposals combined expansive thinking, creative approaches to safety, and a capacity to hold sensitive and sometimes challenging conversations.

Timed to build on the momentum of International Women's Day, the walks were held weekly throughout March 2025, each open to 20 participants. Across four walks, we received 142 sign-ups (made by 72 people), reflecting strong interest in exploring safety and belonging in the City. Participants selection prioritised people with strong ties to the City to ensure the group reflected its diverse communities of workers, residents and visitors. Particular attention was given to engaging underrepresented groups including night workers, disabled people, and ethnic minorities. We invited 15 participants to the first walk, followed by 20 participants to the rest of the walks.

The walks engaged a total of 48 participants including 23 workers, 9 night-time workers, 23 visitors, 12 residents and 8 students.

Among them were 44 women and 4 non-binary people, with 2 disabled people. Through sound, movement, collage, poetry, and performance, they creatively expressed their experiences of the City at night.

The walks fostered intimate and collective moments of reflection exploring current challenges and opportunities that could unlock safer, more active and joyful lives in the City.

To document the walks Publica appointed a photographer who was carefully selected for their ability to sensitively capture the dynamic and often intimate nature of the workshops. Their unobtrusive presence allowed them to document moments of reflection, connection, and creativity without disrupting the atmosphere, helping to preserve the emotional and visual richness of each walk.

17

people engaged in
Out After Dark

13

people engaged in
Let's Go The Long Way Round

12

people engaged in
*Soundscapes for
Collective Reflection*

6

people engaged in
The Nightwatch Carnival

OUT AFTER DARK
with Louisa Tan, Farringdon Without
Observing the City and Defining Hopes through collage making

This workshop invited participants to explore the City after dark and reflect on how it feels to navigate public space at night. Using personal experience, observations, and memories of walking the streets, participants created collage poster artworks to visually communicate their hopes and ideas for a safer, more welcoming City. Led by artist Louisa Tan, the workshop used collage as an accessible and expressive method that welcomed all abilities. The process encouraged participants to reflect on their emotional responses to the City during nighttime and articulate the type of spaces they would like to see.

PARTICIPANTS		
TOTAL		17
REASON IN CoL		
Residents		4
Students		5
Work		9
Visit		8
ETHNICITY		
Asian/Asian British		6
Black/Black British		0
White British		5
Any other white ethnicity		3
Multiple ethnicities		1
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS		2
EVENING AND NIGHT TIME WORKERS		3
GENDER		
Female		16
Non-Binary		1



(04)



(06)

28



(05)

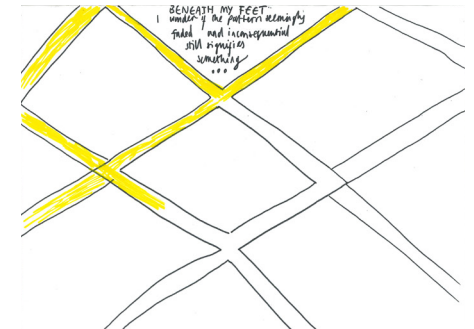
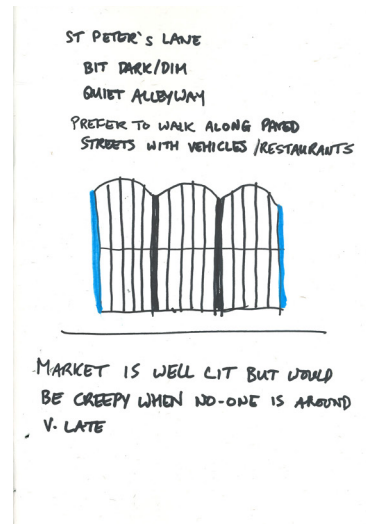
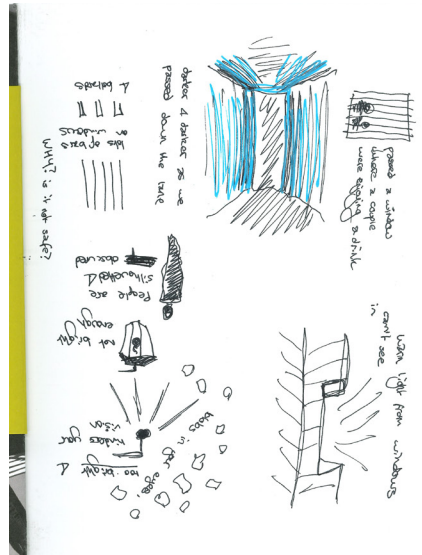
(04)(05) *Out After Dark*



(07)

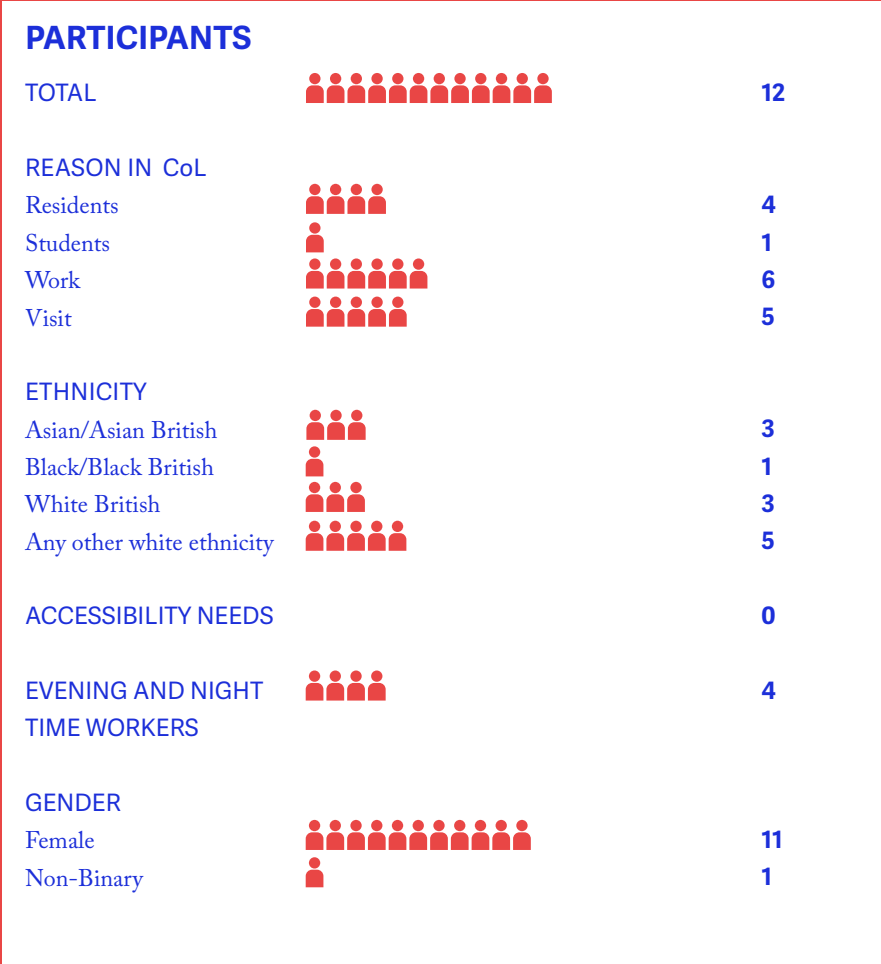
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(06)(07) *Out After Dark*



SOUNDSCAPES FOR COLLECTIVE REFLECTION
with Belinda Zhawi, Aldersgate and Cripplesgate
*Weaving Poetry and sound to map the lived experiences
of the City*

Transforming everyday streets into spaces of reflection, this workshop invited participants to build a collective sonic map through poetry and sound. Led by poet and artist Belinda Zhawi, participants explored their emotional responses to place, lived experience and memory, weaving together sound recordings of the City at night and poetry into the creation of audio compositions that reflect their lived experiences in the City. The resulting soundscapes formed an evocative record of their experiences, offering a tool for advocacy and storytelling with the hope to inform future urban planning and policy in the City.





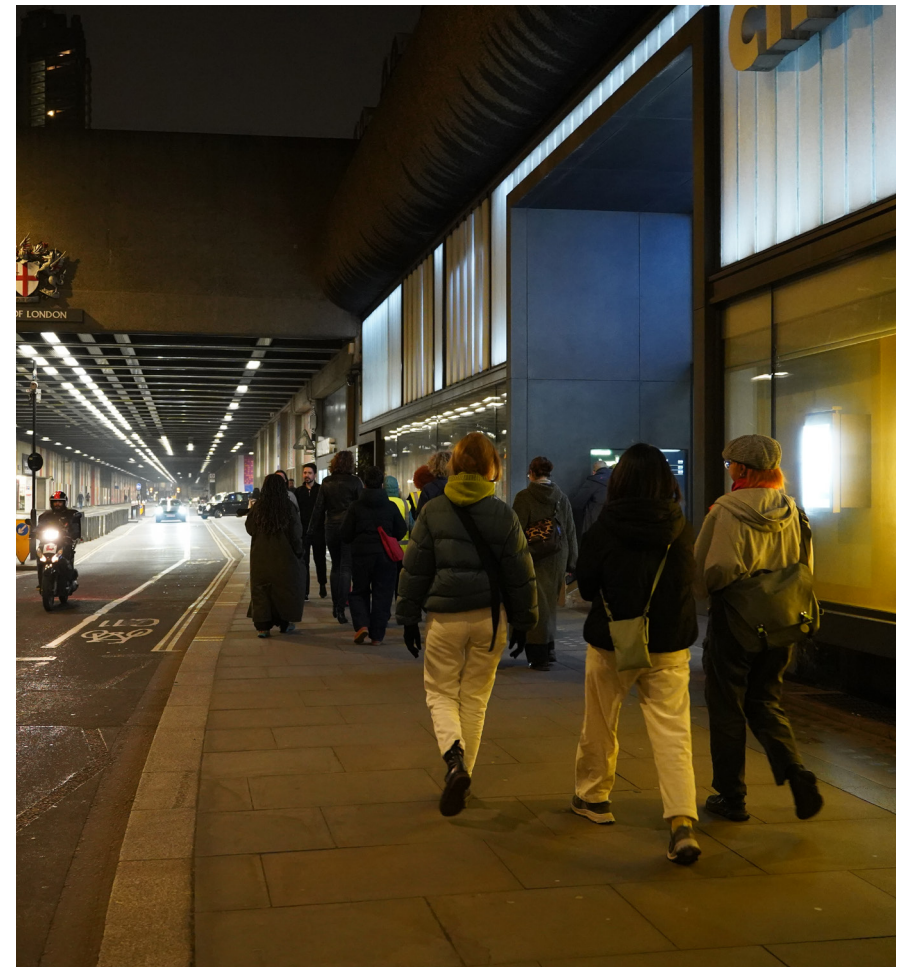
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(11)

(10)(11) *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*



(12)

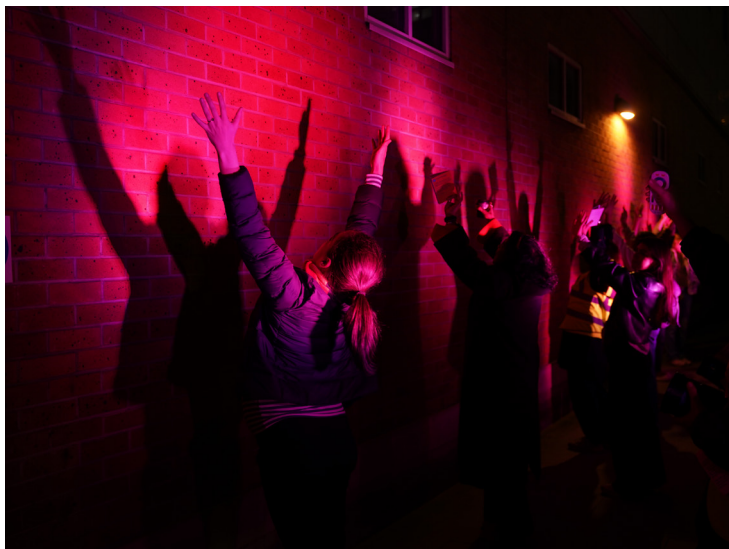
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(12)(13) *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*



LET'S GO THE LONG WAY ROUND
with Clara Fran and Beth Allen, Portsoken
Reimagining the Alleyway as a space of Empowerment
Alleyways are often seen as places to avoid — but what if they could be transformed into spaces of joy, empowerment, and expression? In this workshop, participants used light, movement, and dance to reclaim a forgotten corner of the city. Through body-based exploration and colourful light projections, the alley became a canvas for self-expression and celebration. Led by Clara Fran and Beth Allen, the workshop turned a space of avoidance into one of creativity, connection, and safety.

PARTICIPANTS		
TOTAL		13
REASON IN CoL		
Residents		3
Students		1
Work		4
Visit		7
ETHNICITY		
Asian/Asian British		2
Black/Black British		1
White British		6
Any other white ethnicity		3
Latin American		1
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS		0
EVENING AND NIGHT TIME WORKERS		3
GENDER		
Female		13
Non-Binary		0



(15)



(16)



(17)

42

43

(15)(16) *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

(17) *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

THE NIGHTWATCH CARNIVAL
with María Venegas Rabá, Cornhill
A Performative Reclamation of Space

Participants explored the power of performance to transform public space after dark. Led by artist María Venegas Rabá, participants designed fictional characters embodying their desires, fears, and dreams for how they would want to behave in the City at night. These characters were brought to life through a mask making workshop, outlining a story for each character, and movement and acting in a final street parade — a bold, joyful act of reclaiming visibility, space and voice in the public realm. The Nightwatch Carnival became a joyful celebration using imagination and the carnival as a tool to challenge and reshape urban space.

PARTICIPANTS		
TOTAL		6
REASON IN CoL		
Residents		1
Students		1
Work		4
Visit		3
ETHNICITY		
Asian/Asian British		0
Black/Black British		0
White British		4
Any other white ethnicity		2
Latin American		0
ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS		
		0
EVENING AND NIGHT TIME WORKERS		
		2
GENDER		
Female		4
Non-Binary		2



(19)



(20)

46

(18)(19)(20) *The Nightwatch Carnival*



(18)

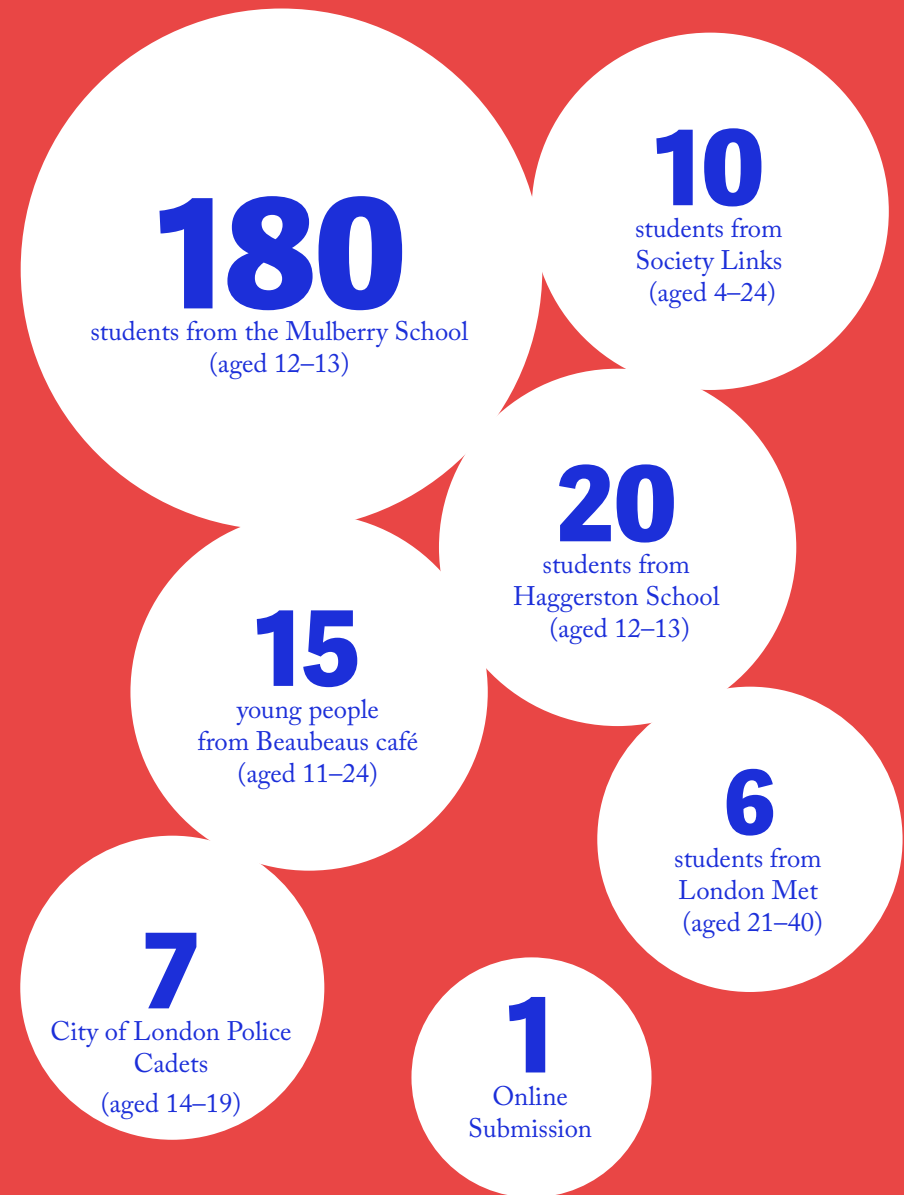
YOUTH DESIGN CHALLENGE

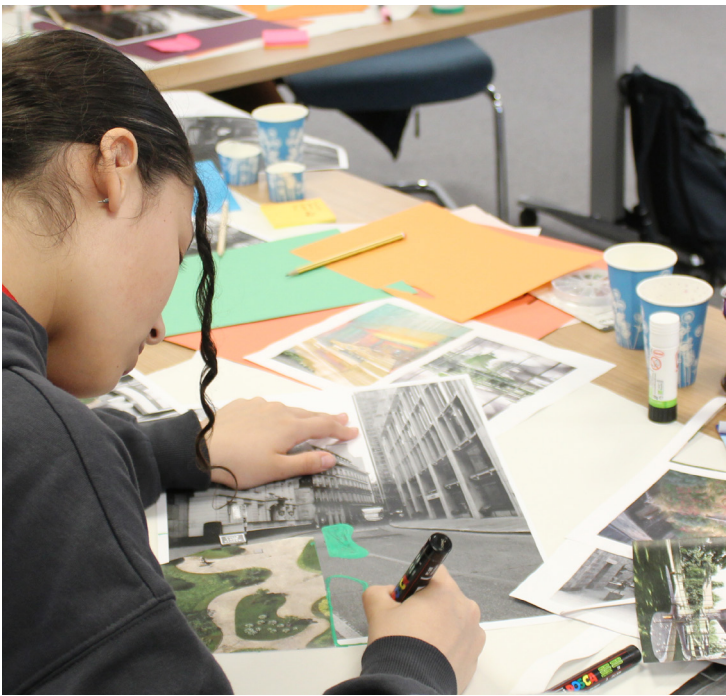
Open to any young women and non-binary youth aged 11–24 who use or are based in the City of London, the Youth Design Challenge proposed the use of collage and poster artwork making as creative tools to re-envision the City's public spaces. Collage-making enabled participants to express their visions and aspirations for a City designed with them in mind. In this way, the challenge created a platform for girls to exchange ideas and visualise their hopes and dreams for what the City could look and feel like, if it was to be designed as a space for them. To support participation, Publica developed a set of accessible online resources, including a written brief, video guide, and photographs of key sites across the City to be used as bases for the collages and poster artwork. Participants could submit their work via email or take part in one of six in-person workshops, specifically designed to reach youth groups with existing ties to the City.

The in-person sessions enabled deeper conversations, collective reflection, and hands-on creative engagement with the theme of safety and belonging. The introductory part of each workshop was designed to allow young women and non-binary youth to identify types of spaces where they experience feelings of safety and belonging, and the features and activities associated with them. It also identified the places girls currently spend time in as well as those they typically avoid or feel uncomfortable in. The second half of the workshops invited participants to take part in a creative collage exercise to re-design their dream public spaces. These collages were used to frame a discussion around how public spaces in the City might better cater for their needs and reflect their lived experiences.

The Youth Design Challenge amplified the voices of 239 young women, girls, and non-binary youth, highlighting their visions for a safer, more inclusive, and joyful City.

We received one submission via email and 238 submissions through six in-person workshops held between March to May 2025.





(21)



(22)



(23)



(24)

50

51

(21) Police Cadets workshop

(22) Society Links workshop

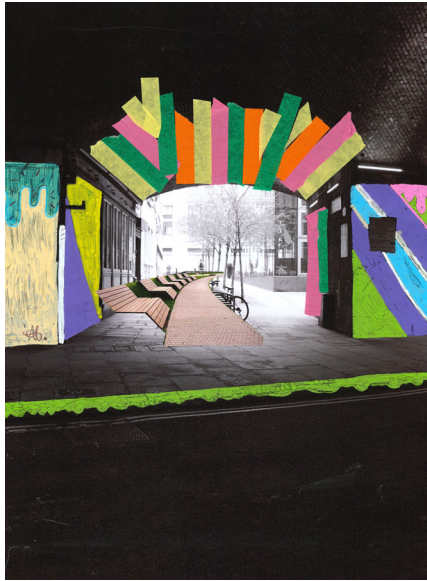
(23) London Met workshop

(24) Barbican workshop

(25) Beaubears café workshop

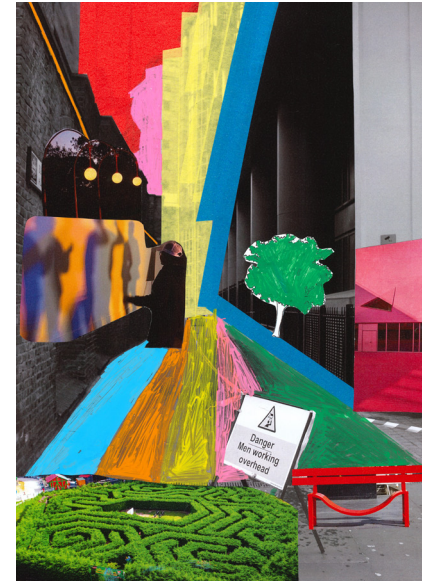


SELECTED WORKS FROM 239 POSTER ARTWORKS



(26)

- I was always scared of DARK places
- I wanted to light up the tunnel with
vivid & luminous colours.
- Under bridges is always dark
adding lights & bright colours
makes it more safer for women &
young guys to walk pass or through



(28)

The vision is to transform dark, unwelcoming spaces/allyways
into a space of reflection, true safety and beauty
The intervention of not just light but also colour
helps people and more specifically women feel safer
and more at ease when commuting or walking through
dark allyways.
The idea of safety when it comes to areas like these
shouldn't be summed up to introducing more lights
or cameras. Safety is about more than that, it's about
the feeling you get when you're in the space, what
the space wants you to know about it.
Therefore, reviving the little kid in the space, would
help introducing comfort.

54



(27)

I see Goulston St. as a place where people can relax from hustle and
bustle of White chapel High St.
There is street food market at the end of Goulston St. and
dedicated area for relaxation, nice lunch with colleagues
or friends will be very useful.
I also would like this street to be greener and more colourful
I think students from London Met will be happy to
create graffiti projects or other designs to implement
in the area, like benches, flowerbeds, installations.

- Enjoy the day
- Have fun with friends
- Take a sit
- Small flowers



(29)

This is a new and modernised version of Sculpture Court.
It is suitable for anyone and has been made more
suitable for young people and especially younger children.
Understanding the fact that this is a residential
area, I have designed a calm green space
filled with plants and trees. ~~The~~ the bumpy concrete
can be used for anyone biking or skateboarding
and passengers ~~can~~ are there if anyone would
like to go for a quiet stroll... Could also
dedicate to the buildings to make the area
feel more safe and exciting. There
is a ~~flowing~~ flowing mini river that has fish inside
its eco friendly with a special mechanism
and there are fish food stations if the
public would perhaps like to feed them...

55

(26) *Light it up!!*, Savage Gardens by Ambia Begum

(27) *Joy for Everyone*, Goulston Street by Lisa Vasileva

(28) *Untitled*, Blue Boar Alley by Fatima Abdallah

(29) *The New and improved Sculpture Court*, Sculpture Court, Barbican
by Maya Obasogie



My aim was to create somewhere, where no one can take over but everyone is included and thought of. I added water features for summer when people are hot. I put in lighting for when it is dark so people feel safe and benches for people who want to chill. I also added greenery to encourage biodiversity and add colour so it is more interesting. I hope for everyone to be able to enjoy and appreciate this space.



This is a place where people come to relax, without the worry of feeling unwelcome or unsafe. It is bright and colourful and the plants are bright all year round. There are benches, swings to relax on and for kids to play on. The soft, purple floor has abstract seating and a sign pushing you to explore the world.

(30)

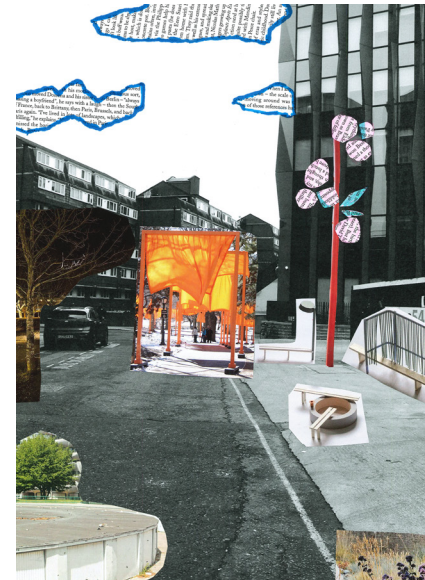
(32)

56



As I was making this I was thinking about bright fun colours. I wanted something for people to walk around in and be happy and be surrounded by fun and joyful decorations / artwork

(31)



- More seating
- Colour
- lights
- decoration
- colourful / random floor tiles for a pop of colour.

(33)

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(30) Coolville, Barbican Centre by Mabli ap Garth

(31) The Vibrant Sculpture Court, Sculpture Court, Barbican Centre, by Amy-Rose

(32) The Purpican, Sculpture Court, Barbican Centre by Isabella Connolly

(33) Untitled, Little Somerset Street by Mabli Suraiya A.L.



In love we learn.
In love we grow.
In love we play.
In love we make.
In love we are Safe.
In Love we are welcome.
In Love we are one.



Brighter, more feminine friendly London

(34)

(36)

58



'Lights stay on' is a highly illuminated space to avoid any intimidating corners or alleys. ~~the~~ The space is committed to being lit up 24/7 - powered by large solar panels. The space has an assemble water fountain, with a 'grout vending machine', so people can also access ~~this resource~~ 24/7. The space is labelled 'WALK HERE' to be welcoming and to punctuate the safe nature of the space. Though the bridge is functionally necessary, ~~the~~ under the bridge is well-lit with structures + seating to re-invent the scary ~~like~~ or 'under the bridge'.



light shines across busy streets,
People's ~~the~~ faces glow,
music makes you feel cozy
the smell of food fills your nose
No one tries to rip down the LGBTQ+ flag,
which ~~saucy~~ saucy proudly in the wind.
You feel safe, knowing that if anything happens,
people will help you
and the light helps you see.

(37)

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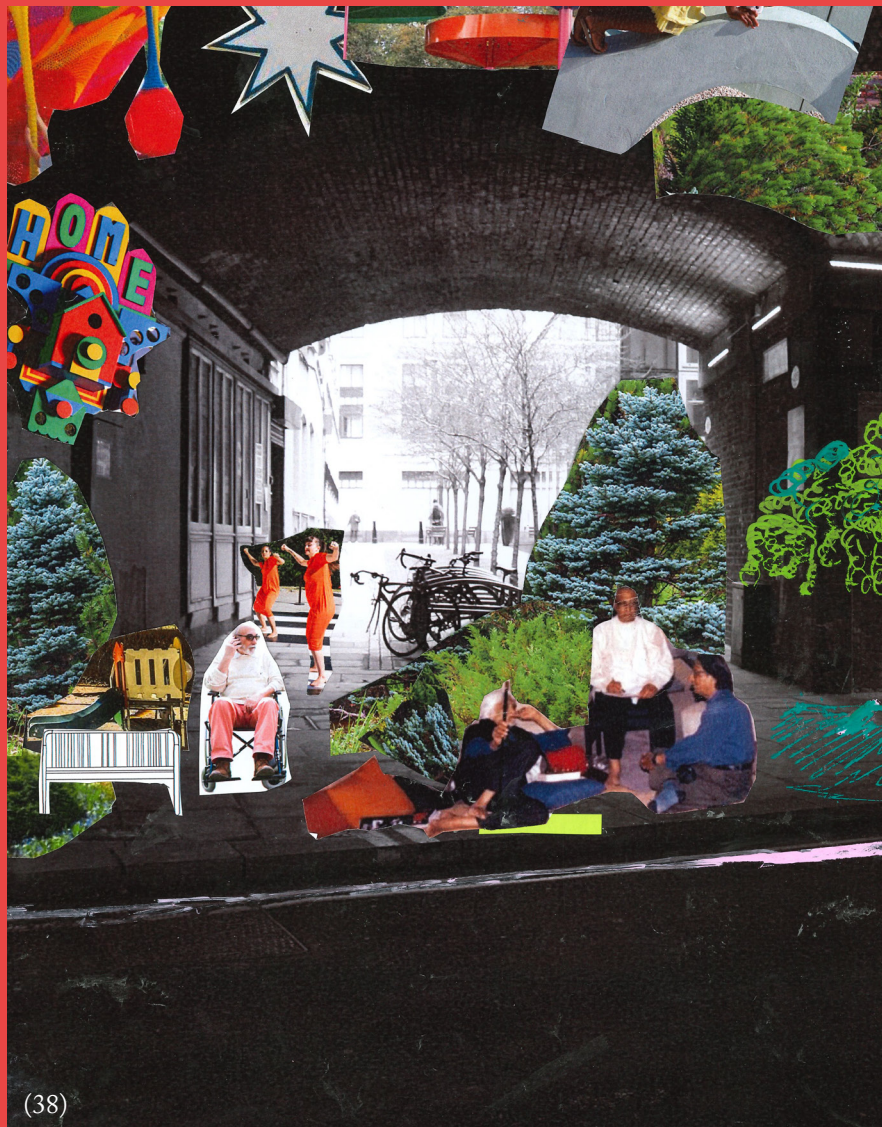
(34) Pursuit of Love, Crutched Friars by Trinity A Stephens

(36) London Dream, Savage Gardens by Izzy Warman

(35) Lights Stay on, Crutched Friars Junction by Alisa Bury

(37) Visions, Old Broad Street by Satie Parisot Fedhila

(38) ALLLOVE, Savage Gardens by Amadis Allum-Lauria



is essentially
 Re-imagining an alley way, ~~then~~ re-imagining a feeling. Looking down a dark alley way feeling empty and ~~time~~ to uncomfortable to go down should not be direction in my ~~commute~~ route. This alley way reflects hope and a feeling of curiosity to explore the streets that engulf us. I want my streets to reflect me. It reflects my hope, joy and what I stand for. It ~~is~~ I want to be a product of my environment let it be a happy place, a green place a welcoming space. Where there is a light at the end of the tunnel let the tunnel be part of the light part of the journey that inspires and fulfills. Me. My streets are me and I am proud of myself as a light that wants to be found and not dreaded.

CELEBRATION EVENT

To conclude the Right to the City programme, Publica hosted a final celebration event to showcase the creative work generated throughout the project and share the process, insights, and stories gathered along the way. The Final Celebration took place in Studio Smitfield, a site that is reusing space for creativity. The event was the opportunity to award the winners and commended entries of the Youth Design Challenge.

The event was a moment of reflection and recognition, an opportunity to honour the voices, experiences, and creative visions that shaped the programme, while building momentum for continued collaboration around a safer, more inclusive City. The energy and responses to the Final Celebration Event underscored the importance of sharing the work widely across the City's organisations and businesses, offering a valuable evidence base for what is possible.

Continuing to share the work delivered in this first phase of work including lessons learned and key insights can support businesses in demonstrating their commitment to women's safety. This process also presents an opportunity to build capacity among key collaborators and clarify shared ambitions for the project's next steps.



(39)



(40)



(41)



(42)

(39)(40)(41) Exhibition space, Celebration Event

(42) Prize-giving, Celebration Event

WHAT WE FOUND

The information gathered through Right to the City builds a picture of women's experience of safety in public spaces across the five wards. This chapter describes how creative engagement methodologies, urban design and social norms intersect to shape women's safety and sense of belonging. By highlighting the everyday challenges women voiced, the chapter highlights key observations gathered through this work and proposes a set of recommendations for the City of London authorities, and the Right to the City's network of collaborators, in line with their desire to create safer and more inclusive City of London.

This chapter focuses on the common themes that emerged across the artist-led Women's Night Walks, the Youth Design Challenge, and discussions with the Advisory Board of collaborators.

These have been organised into four key themes:

1. **PERCEPTION OF SAFETY**
2. **THE VALUE OF CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES**
3. **PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY**
4. **FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

As of 2025, the City of London stands out as one of the safest areas in both London and the UK. In 2023, it recorded an overall crime rate of 27 crimes per 1,000 people, which is 74% lower than the London average and 68% lower than the national average for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. However, the women, girls and non-binary people who participated in the Right to the City programme described feeling unsafe in the City, especially after dark. This work explores the gap between the concept of safety understood through crime statistics, and the perception of safety, understood through the lived and embodied experiences that shape the everyday lives of women and girls in the City.

WOMEN'S FEAR IS OFTEN ROOTED IN THEIR HISTORY

Much of the fear women experience is rooted in the normalisation of street harassment, including unwanted sexual attention, sexist comments, and catcalling. Additionally, these behaviours will not get recorded or classified as crimes. Left unaddressed, the perception is such behaviour is not taken seriously, dismissed, or at worst, laughed off. While this normalisation perpetuates the invisibility of such violence in official data, it can also have a profound impact on freedom of movement, presence, and participation in public space. During the night walks, participants described moving through the City in a state of constant vigilance, carefully planning their routes, avoiding eye contact with strangers, staying alert, and walking quickly. Some women reflected on how these behaviours are deeply ingrained strategies, adopted daily to navigate public space. Anecdotes and experiences shared reveal that women's fear in public space is often rooted in personal and collective histories of violence, where feelings and memories of violence are carried in the body, travelling with them into every street, alley, and square. These fears shape their daily movement through the City and inform what streets they take, where they feel safe to pause and dwell, and how they choose to present themselves in public space.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Women's Safety Champions in City Businesses

City of London Police, BIDS, The City Belonging Project

Continue to support the creation of Women's Safety Champions networks (i.e. Our Safer City) within and across business sectors in the City of London to create a support system to share insights on women's safety experiences and amplifying women's voices in the City of London. Foster the opportunity for these networks to hold regular meetings to discuss concerns, identify trends, and collaborate on actionable solutions. The networks would help create measurable impact, providing a more coordinated and informed approach to improving safety.

Deliver training for businesses, cultural institutions and community groups

City of London Police, BIDS, cultural institutions and City of London Corporation

Pilot initiatives to develop and roll out business training to ensure staff can spot and intervene when they witness sexual harassment or other types of predatory behaviours. Deliver bystander training through Business Improvement Districts, City of London Corporation, cultural institutions, community groups, and other local networks and develop an accreditation scheme to showcase businesses and organizations that have had their staff trained to be active bystanders.



(43) *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"The workshop has made me much more aware of the feelings and memories I carry in my body in different types of spaces, in a way I usually don't have the time to experience or acknowledge."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"It is comforting to know that other women experience similar things. Maybe, when walking down the road we can do something to make each other feel safer."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"I realised how much I am unable to enjoy nighttime, although it is my favourite part of the day."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"There's an irony in the fact that I feel safest on a bike — even though it's objectively the most physically dangerous thing to do after a night out. But it means I don't have to interact with anyone. I can just zoom past people. The only time I feel comfortable going down an alleyway is if I'm on an e-bike. No one's going to jump in front of me. So I'd say there's an irony in putting yourself in a more compromising situation just to avoid — usually — men."

Participant in Youth Design Challenge, Beabeaus café

"It costs money to feel safe. We spend hundreds of pounds on Ubers just to avoid sitting on a bus where something might happen. But even in an Uber, you're still on edge — checking who the driver is, making sure your location is shared. It's never fully safe."

Participant in Youth Design Challenge, Beabeaus café

"If something happened to me, my mum would be furious that I took that route. I still really carry around self-blame, which I think a lot of people do as well. When I think of Sarah Everard, she did everything right. And I think, for me, what keeps me from being like I'm going to go that way, is that every time I tell myself that if I die my mum would be so angry."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"Walking home and having anxiety... you know when they say, 'don't have your earphones in?' So you're always on edge, always alert. It's exhausting."

Participant in Youth Design Challenge, Beabeaus café

"You also should have to think that you're lucky. If I've done something, typically when I've been drinking, I've been like 'God, that was stupid. That was lucky that I got away with it.' And that sort of narrative really bothers me that it still comes into my head. It is ingrained in us."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"If I get home alive, I made it! What an extraordinary thing to think every day."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"When I first moved to London, I would stand under a streetlight in the hope that would keep me safe until I walked up the courage to walk further. I spent a lot of time standing under streetlights. Somehow, today, following that light around the alleyway suddenly triggered that memory, which I haven't thought about in a long time. So, it was like a weird thing of my initial reaction being like one of fun and then a kind of more learned memory, a deeper memory of some of these behaviours in the city."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

WOMEN'S SENSE OF BELONGING

In workshop discussions, women expressed that many spaces in the City feel as though they were not designed with them in mind. They described the urban environment as unwelcoming. Some of these spaces, sometimes associated with street drinking, create an atmosphere where women feel unsafe or excluded from exploring and discovering the City. Unlike other parts of central London where there are many medieval courts and alleys, the monoculture of landuse in the City of London means that after office hours, these spaces become unwelcoming, empty and places of high risk. The built environment can send implicit signals that women's presence is not welcomed, recognised, or valued. Central to a sense of safety in public spaces is the feeling of belonging: the perception that spaces and their principle uses are designed with women and girls' needs and priorities in mind, making them feel welcomed and valued.

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"Being able to collectively reclaim space that I would usually not go to, gave me a whole new feeling for the City and what it means to inhabit a female body."

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

"I'm reflecting on how to take up more space when I'm used to not taking up space in public."

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

"The ability to reclaim and take-up space. I think I will in future reclaim areas and try to walk with large groups of people and take on the night."

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

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"Only once, in Blue Boar Alley, we met one woman on her own who walked through, everywhere else it was just men or couples. This suggests that there are whole parts of the City that aren't designed for us to navigate on our own, so that we don't feel like we have equal access to them."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*



(44)



(45)

(44) *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

(45) *The Nightwatch Carnival*

THE VALUE OF CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

The methodologies adopted during the night walks and the youth design challenge aim to expand the conversation beyond fear and into possibility. In *From What Is to What If*, Rob Hopkins writes, “Creating the world we want to live in... is the work of imagination”. Engaging imagination in this work is a vital tool for transformation, enabling public spaces to be shaped by the people who use them, and for futures that reflect their hopes.

The workshops’ experimental and playful approaches revealed the transformative potential of creativity in reshaping perceptions of safety. Engaging with light, sound, making and collage allowed participants to transform spaces often perceived as unsafe into spaces of belonging and empowerment. Through colour, play, dance, masquerades, and collective presence, dark corners, alleyways and courts in the City became spaces of joy and collective reflection. These creative interventions generated new, empowering memories tied to these locations. The exploration of anonymity also opened up new ways of navigating public space, offering some participants a renewed sense of liberation and agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fund and implement creative community engagement programmes to inform safety at a local level

BIDS, cultural institutions, City of London Corporation (CILNF and Engagement Team), City of London Police

Create funds to support interactive and experiential programmes that empower women to navigate and reclaim public spaces. Plan women-led neighbourhood events, such as safety walks, that adopt creative methodologies to inhabit public space through movement, playfulness and creative expression to complement existing on-street safety measures. These initiatives offer opportunities for women to come together, share their experiences and needs, feel connected and visible.

TAKING UP SPACE

During the night walks, participants described experiencing a deeper sense of safety and confidence in their bodies. They noted that taking up space in locations they traditionally avoided was a powerful experience, encouraging a shift in behaviour and nurturing a renewed sense of safety. We all experience public spaces through our bodies. Recognising the body as ‘the geography closest in’, as described by feminist theorist Adrienne Rich, and as the primary site of lived experience, fear, and trauma, participants emphasised the importance of embodied experiences in transforming perceptions of safety. For many, the sudden and renewed feeling of safety was profound, with some expressing feeling more confident to pass through and dwell in similar spaces in the future. In particular, seeing more women and women on their own navigating streets and spaces had a profound impact. Participants also noted that wearing masks created a genderless presence on the streets, fostering a sense of liberation. Similarly, the use of lights helped shift traditional power dynamics on the streets and enabled participants to embody a new physicality.

"The alleys we engaged with might be perceived as scary when you walked into them, but because of the type of movement we were doing and it being more regulating, it was less scary."
Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

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"The city now belongs to me; I feel that more deeply."
Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"I don't know how to take space publicly, how to claim it"
Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*



SLOWING DOWN

The artist-led women night walks created a temporary invitation for new ways of being in public space: an invitation to move differently, to dwell, to notice, and to let go of the vigilance many women carry. Many participants described the simple act of slowing down — pausing, closing their eyes, and being still in public space at night — as a profound and unfamiliar experience. Some women shared that they had never felt safe enough to close their eyes in public before, due to the fear of male violence. This shift allowed for a deeper awareness of their surroundings and a greater sense of ease. This sits in contrast to the often-instinctive reaction women adopt when they feel unsafe, which is to tighten their bodies, move faster and become less observant and curious about their surroundings. One group reflected on how social narratives about who belongs in public space affect people's ability to take up space, be slow and dwell in the city.

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(47) *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"Slowing down regulates the nervous system. Yet in those spaces, we often rush, triggering the fight-or-flight responses in the body."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"Because we were together, I felt safe at all times, even when there were men observing, or when we were in dark, usually deemed 'unsafe', spaces. This allowed me to slow down and observe my surroundings."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"I often feel betrayed by the darkness."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

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"I was suddenly able to close my eyes. I did not need to be vigilant. I felt allowed to listen. While laying down on a bench, I let the sounds of the city seep into me."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"I didn't expect that marching through, faster, with more energy and strength, would make me feel more tense, putting my body in a more stressed position than when I moved slowly, even if it was against the grain of London. I noticed that when we were in the alley with the brick arches, people would speed past us. And I thought, wow, if women slowed down and looked at us, they'd actually be claiming a lot of power for themselves."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

BRINGING WOMEN TOGETHER

Participants highlighted the power of women-led, community-based events in fostering safety, connection, and confidence. Walking together and being in a group of women, many felt empowered, visible, and in control of space for the first time. Sharing experiences with the group validated their feelings and reinforced that they are not alone, making the issue of safety more visible and tangible. This experience was profound for the women in the group and opened a sense of safety and power on the streets that they had rarely experienced before. This experience reinforced the importance of feeling connected to other women and the wider community and is something that can be nurtured and built upon.

"I felt empowered by being in a group of women sharing. Safety has become a shared experience."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"Collective action gives us some sort of authority in space."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"I am not alone in my experiences."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"I didn't quite realize the power of having so many of us there. We don't know each other, but you just feel like you've got allyship there."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"I recognised how significantly being in a group changed my perception of the City and how I experience it."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"By being together, these spaces lose their strength immediately."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"I realised how worried other women are about safety and how much they avoid alleys."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"Creating an awareness of making yourself feel like an ally and helping other people make themselves feel like an ally. Even if you've not got an organized group like this. This will make scary spaces that maybe we can't change that much, feel better."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

DOING THIS IN PUBLIC SPACE

For many participants, moving through the City at night, together, with purpose transformed unfamiliar routes and revealed overlooked corners: hidden courtyards, fountains, and architectural details that had previously gone unnoticed. Recognising the existing beauty of the City evoked feelings of connecting participants more deeply with their surroundings, and fostering a greater feeling of belonging. Similarly, the process of becoming more aware of our surroundings stood in direct contrast to the fast, guarded movement many women adopt to avoid feeling vulnerable. Participants described heightened awareness as a powerful act of presence, awareness, and spatial reclamation, where they were learning about their surroundings, critically noticing what features made them feel welcomed and safe and what didn't.

Experiencing these spaces physically and collectively — rather than discussing safety in a room — allowed participants to form new memories of those places. This process helped to re-write the emotional history of those environments and foster feelings of safety that could be carried forward, positively shaping future experiences of the same locations. These reflections reinforced the need for more discussions and forums about safety and shared experiences of safety in public spaces, such as organised night walks and support networks.

"Yes, it is possible to change how you are feeling in a space."

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

"I never knew all these small, beautiful fountains and courtyards existed because I had never ventured down alone."

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

"I became a keener observer of public spaces."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"The city is mine. I feel that more deeply now."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"I think I will bring the awareness that the feeling of safety is possible."

Participant in *Soundscapes for Collective Reflection*

"I have now become more conscious of our surroundings and started to think about it positively: how can we change things?"

Participant in *Out After Dark*



PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY

In conversations held throughout the Youth Design Challenge workshops, young women expressed a clear vision for a City of London that is safer, more joyful, and truly inclusive. They pointed out that the design, feel, and upkeep of public space directly affect whether women, girls, and non-binary people feel welcome and catered for. When women do not have their basic needs met, it sends the message that they do not belong, that they don't matter and that they are not wanted in public space. Equally, when women's needs are met, they are more likely to assume that the space is built *for them* and to spend more time there. In turn, their presence in public space signals to others that they also belong. These themes were echoed in the artist-led women's night walks and in discussions with the Right to the City Board. The following section outlines the specific public space needs and asks expressed by women, for women, in the City of London.

CORE URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Participants in the artist-led women night walks raised how having access to more seating, wider pavements, visible signage, and warmer low-level lighting, can create a more welcoming and safer environment. Public spaces with water or greenery felt safer and encouraged freedom of movement, while the overreliance on CCTV and nighttime restrictions, such as closing off courts and alleyways, was seen as limiting women's autonomy.

Similarly, the posters submitted as entries to the Youth Design Challenge emphasized core principles of good urban design: the creation of inviting spaces; suggestions included the use of colour to foster a sense of belonging and vibrancy; well designed lighting to enhance visibility and comfort at night. Public art and decorative interventions were seen as ways to celebrate the local cultural identity. Expanding on these principles, participants associated well-maintained streets with care and safety, while neglected areas were perceived as uncared for, reinforcing the feeling of abandonment and risk. Narrow, tight spaces were described as intimidating due to limited visibility and escape routes. Many young women also called for more active frontages, activities on the street and visible signs of community life and informal surveillance through the presence of shopkeepers, residents, workers and visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Develop a Public Realm Inclusion Strategy

City of London Corporation

Develop a Public Realm Inclusion Strategy for the City of London that is founded on the principles of safety, equity and belonging to inform the development of public space design, planning, and management. This strategy should be informed by the lived experiences of women and the most underrepresented communities in the City, and guided by inclusive design principles that prioritise accessibility and inclusion.

Enhance opportunities for rest and respite

City of London Corporation (Projects and Planning)

Prioritise the inclusion of greenery including trees, green walls, urban planting along with fountains, water features and pools, to create welcoming spaces for rest, recreation, and respite. To support overall well-being, green spaces should be actively integrated into all new urban design projects. This can support opportunities for rest and respite, allowing women, girls, and non-binary people to dwell and relax in public spaces without the constant need for vigilance.

Lighting

City of London Corporation (Projects and Planning)

Where possible, review and improve public lighting in unlit, narrow areas such as alleyways, parks, courts and lanes to enhance safety and visibility at night. Explore opportunities to implement warmer and soft light and colourful light projections to aid a sense of playfulness and joy in these spaces.

"I would love to have access to more open spaces and working water features!"

Participant in *The Nightwatch Carnival*

"Continuous lighting felt more inviting, making blind spots visible and open."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"We need more seating areas, visible and accessible spaces, wider pavements, safer road surfaces."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"Being able to see or understand that there is an exit to an alley also helps. Perhaps a signage indicating that the alley continues could help."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"Reimagining an alleyway is essentially reimagining a feeling. Looking down a dark alleyway, feeling eerie and too uncomfortable to go there, should not be a direction in my route. My alleyway reflects hope and a feeling of curiosity to explore the streets that engulf us. I want my streets to reflect me, to reflect my hope, my joy, and what I stand for.

If I want to be a product of my environment, let it be a happy place, a green and welcoming place where there is light at the end of the tunnel. Let the tunnel be part of the light, part of the journey that inspires and fulfils me. My streets are me and I'm proud of myself as a light that wants to be found and not dreaded."

Participant in Youth Design Challenge, Beaubeaus café



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(49)(50) *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

CELEBRATING THE PRESENCE OF COMMUNITY

Participants and collaborators noted the importance of protecting, supporting, and expanding community spaces across the City of London. Although the residential population is small, there is a strong desire for accessible public areas and community-led events that reflect women's lived experiences — whether they work in, visit, or live in the City. Young women and girls lamented a lack of dedicated spaces, naming Beaubeaus café, in Aldgate, as one of the only places where they feel represented. Others highlighted Society Links, Portsoken Community Centre, and the Police Cadets initiative as vital reference points for connection and support. Exploring opportunities to develop a bold ground floor strategy that expands cultural and community uses at ground level can serve not only residents, but the growing number of women, girls, and non-binary people working in the City, transforming it into a vibrant, inclusive urban environment seven days a week.

Discussions with the Right to the City Advisory Board explored reimagining the City's network of Safe Havens beyond mere points of refuge. How can we assess that these spaces are welcoming and inclusive for women? Instead of relying solely on a masculine security presence or being confined to corporate buildings, these sites could host community activities, support everyday interactions, and serve as trusted reference points for diverse communities and the high proportion of female workers in the City. In this way, Safe Havens have the potential to cultivate a stronger sense of safety, belonging, and connection for women and non-binary people navigating the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Safe Havens as vibrant hubs

Our Safer City and Crime Prevention Association

Explore opportunities to review and audit the existing network of Safe Havens with women to ensure they are vibrant, welcoming spaces that are located in active, populated areas that are well-maintained and feel inclusive. To strengthen their role as true community hubs, consider hosting community-led activities that invite broader participation while centring women's safety and wellbeing. This could include working with artists and trauma-informed practitioners to help programme these spaces and ensure they continue to meet women's needs effectively.

Protect and invest in community spaces for young women and girls

City of London Corporation

Secure and actively protect existing community spaces available for local communities, with a clear focus on young women and girls. Prioritise the protection and long-term security of existing community spaces by implementing policies that prevent displacement, ensuring affordable access, and actively investing in their maintenance and enhancement. This will safeguard vital spaces for residents, fostering social connections and community well-being.

Develop grants for women safety interventions

City of London Police and City of London Corporation (CILFN)

Consider supporting initiatives that co-design urban spaces with young women and girls. There is an urgent need to create safe, inclusive gathering places where young people, particularly girls, can build social connections and feel a sense of belonging and ownership in their city. Currently, many young girls rely on food retailers such as grocery stores, fast food restaurants like McDonald's, or beverage retailers like bubble tea shops, as informal gathering spots. These locations often offer visibility and public surveillance, which can contribute to a sense of safety. However, these are not spaces designed with them in mind, nor do they fully support their social, emotional, or creative needs.

"This is one of the only places left in the City where creative people can gather without it feeling out of place or transactional. If you're not part of pub culture, where else can you go? Outside of a few spots — most of which have shut down, there's nowhere. And you definitely can't just hang out in a park at night."

Participant in Youth Design Challenge, Beaubeaus café

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"Community isn't for sale."

Participant in *Out After Dark*

"We need more spaces to support, host, and house community activities. It's very hard to find available, accessible, and affordable venues in the City. We need places where people can easily offer yoga and meditation classes, forums, creative workshops, and more. These spaces must be accessible both physically and financially."

Collaborator, Right to the City board



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(51) *The Nightwatch Carnival*

PUBLIC TOILETS

Collaborators highlighted the need for accessible, open, and well-lit spaces with appropriate amenities such as toilets, places to sit and shading. They raised that the lack of public toilets and the closure of existing facilities in the City of London have created significant barriers for women and specific religious groups, who may not feel comfortable relying on pubs for access to toilets. This issue is particularly evident in areas like Smithfield, where limited alternatives exist. Women's movement and active lives rely on suitable infrastructure that reflects their needs and realities. This includes a particular need for access to toilets. When these are not freely available, access to amenities depends on one's ability to pay for alternatives, such as purchasing a coffee to use the toilet. One collaborator noted that the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the impact of inadequate toilet provision, affecting people's confidence and willingness to visit the City. Expanding community toilet schemes and ensuring accessible, dedicated facilities supporting active life in the City are essential to addressing this concern.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Public Toilets, Conveniences Availability and Accessibility

City of London Corporation (Projects & Planning), BIDS

Consider integrating public toilets as a public benefit in development projects. This could serve as a pilot for accessible toilet schemes across the City, in collaboration with businesses and cultural institutions. The aim is to provide inclusive, safe, and clearly signposted facilities that meet a wide range of needs—especially where current reliance on pubs limits access for certain groups. Explore opportunities to include Changing Places toilets to enhance accessibility, and extend free access into the evening and night-time to better support both visitors and workers.

"When looking at women's experience in the City beyond safety itself, one issue that comes up repeatedly is the lack of public conveniences. The closure of public toilets, particularly around areas like Smithfield, has made the City overly reliant on pubs—which not everyone feels comfortable using, especially members of certain religious communities.

During COVID, this lack of access significantly impacted people's confidence to come into the City, simply due to fears about not being able to find a toilet."

Collaborator, Right to the City board

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PUBLIC ART AND MEMORIALISATION

Participants in the Artist-led Women Night Walks emphasized the vital role of memorialisation and public art in shaping who is visible and celebrated in the City's history and urban landscape. They called for greater recognition of women's contributions through statues, street names, and inclusive signage that reflect the diverse cultural fabric of the City and its immediate adjacencies. This was raised as an important factor in raising awareness of how women have occupied and contributed to the development of the City and therefore how they might have power to continue to do so. It was noted how stories and touristic tours of Jack the Ripper currently dominate the narrative of the City in the area surrounding Aldgate and its borders with Whitechapel. Participants voiced the desire to reverse this narrative and instead focus on stories where women were pivotal in transforming society and where they had positive impact on public space. Diverse cultural representation and more inclusive signage and wayfinding could transform the City urban spaces, enhancing women's identity, presence and sense of safety in the City.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Celebrate Women's presence in Public Space

City of London Corporation, BIDS, cultural institutions, local artists

Foreground and celebrate women's stories in public spaces through murals, signage, statues, and memorials. Invest in public art projects that showcase and share women's histories. Seek opportunities to incorporate new murals and artistic installations into major public spaces. Whenever possible, collaborate with women, girls, and non-binary individuals to co-design these artistic interventions. Allocate funding for the co-design of public art and wayfinding interventions.

"I exited the station and saw on my Google Maps that a dimly lit alley, where I wanted to head to, was marked as a Jack the Ripper tour stop, where a victim's body was found. Seeing that made me feel unsafe and felt as Google Maps was telling me 'you're a victim' before I'd even gotten out of the station."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

"Stop memorialising Jack the Ripper. More visibility to women and globalising narrative through public art, strategy, naming etc. Warmer lighting, different types of space."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*

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"It's so ingrained in our curriculum. I was taught about Jack the Ripper. And I learned nothing about the victims. They were almost dehumanized. We don't learn their names; they were just labelled 'prostitutes,' so we feel no sympathy. I spoke to a friend who teaches history, and they still teach Jack, but they never teach about the history of migration here. The border area between the City of London and Whitechapel has such a rich history, yet the only thing they pick to teach kids is Jack the Ripper."

Participant in *Let's Go the Long Way Round*



CITY OF LONDON
WARD OF CRIPPLEGATE
ALDERWOMAN

ELIZABETH ANNE KING		
WITHIN	COMMON COUNCIL MEN	WITHOUT
CEBI WILKINS (DEPUTY)	NATASHA LLOYD	TY)
ANNE CORBETT	FRANCES I	
PAUL SINGH	JACOB ROBT	
DAWN FRAMPTON		

WARD CLERK

IAN CORNELIUS THOMAS CRE - TOWN CLERK'S DEPT, GUILF
HON. WARD CLERK - MICHAEL SHAPIRO CO. TOWN CL

NOTICES

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Participants and the Advisory Board reflected on the next steps they would like to see to improve safety experiences in the City.

COMMUNICATIONS AND BETTER COORDINATION

Discussion with the Advisory Board of collaborators highlighted fragmented communication both within the local authority and with key stakeholders including BIDs, community groups, and cultural institutions, resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities for greater impact. Participants and collaborators emphasized the need for a cohesive communication strategy to clearly promote and signpost cultural events, community-led initiatives, creative heritage programs, and available funding opportunities related to women's safety in public spaces. Improved coordination amongst existing communication would enhance and encourage broader participation from women, girls, and non-binary individuals in the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Streamline Communication and Resource Sharing to Keep Women, Girls, and Non-Binary People Informed

City of London

Explore opportunities to streamline communication channels and pool resources to make access to relevant information easier and more efficient and share knowledge to help ensure women, girls and non-binary people in the City of London stay informed about policies, plans, and events that may impact them.

NURTURE COLLABORATION

The Right to the City project demonstrated the impact of collaboration among community groups, cultural institutions, City of London Police, BIDS and the City Corporation. The breadth of engagement and support received by collaborators throughout the process highlights a significant opportunity to build on these connections. Participants and collaborators voiced the opportunity to continue working together across neighbourhoods and sectors to address women's safety, belonging, and inclusion in the City. Sustaining and nurturing these City-wide collaborations is essential to create lasting, community-driven change.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Foster City-Wide Partnerships to inform Women's Safety

City of London Corporation (Engagement), City Belonging, BIDS, cultural institutions, residents

Leverage the momentum from Right to the City to foster ongoing collaboration across diverse stakeholders to create lasting, community-driven change around women's safety. Connect and strengthen existing initiatives (e.g. City of Women, City Belonging) to establish a formal Women's Safety Network. This network should include advisory panels, public forums, and other channels for continuous dialogue and feedback, ensuring women and community representatives have a seat at the table and decision-making power to shape their own neighbourhoods.

BENCHMARKING AND LONGER-TERM IMPACT

Through Right to the City we explored how feelings of safety are deeply connected to a sense of inclusion and agency within a space. While public realm projects cannot guarantee that everyone feels safe, it can foster inclusion, visibility, and a sense of ownership. A sense of safety often emerges when people feel they belong, see themselves reflected in the environment, and believe their presence is acknowledged and valued.

During the meetings held with collaborators, a central theme of discussion was how to measure progress over time. We discussed opportunities for the next phases of the project to explore ways to track progress and build the case for how investment in the public realm delivers desired outcomes, particularly relating to inclusion and access.

An insightful case study was shared from London Metropolitan University's ongoing work with Aldgate Connect. At an exhibition on Vine Street, MA Public Art and Performative Practice students are using creative methods to observe and visualise how people interact with their environment through sound, light, and phone usage, among other factors. This raised the exciting potential for creative approaches to deepen understanding of emotional responses to public spaces. Such methods have supported other projects in capturing how people feel seen, heard, and able to influence their surroundings. These reflections highlighted potential projects for follow-up funding to further explore these themes with the City of London Corporation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Translate recommendations into tangible next steps

All Stakeholders, Right to the City Board

Explore ways to take the recommendations on board and develop a clear and feasible implementation plan to ensure sustained commitment. Identify opportunities for joint follow-up funding to secure dedicated resources for these initiatives.

Audit the City Plan 2040

City of London Corporation (Planning Policy)

Undertake a comprehensive review of the City Plan 2040, with a focus on auditing hidden and underutilized spaces across the City of London. Identify potential pilot sites for gender-inclusive public space interventions. This work will support the strategic policy objectives on Health, Inclusion, and Safety.

Conduct temporary projects in the City

City of London Corporation

Work with the City of London to implement temporary co-design projects engaging with lighting, sound installations, wayfinding etc.

Design a benchmarking pilot to measure impact

City of London Corporation, BIDS, London Met

Partner with local educational institutions to conduct a benchmarking research project through which piloting monitoring methodologies in key City spaces, focusing on how people experience inclusion, safety, and belonging. Develop creative data-collection tools, to capture and track findings consistently across all sites.

NEXT STEPS

Right to the City revealed a strong foundation for ongoing joint action on the theme of women's safety. Throughout the project delivery, it became evident there was a significant appetite from workers and organisations in the City to engage with the theme of gender inclusion and safety in public space. We have already been approached by numerous stakeholders across the City to share our learning from the project and participate in ongoing conversations about gender inclusion and safety, underscoring the relevance and urgency of this work.

As Right to the City enters its next phase, we are responding to this enthusiasm by seeking further funding to deliver a series of workshops and activities with local businesses in the City. These sessions will unpack key learnings, provide training and upskilling, and support organisations in demonstrating their commitment to women's safety. This approach will help support a City-wide investment in women's safety, build capacity among collaborators and clarify shared ambitions.

This interim phase will lay the groundwork for the second phase of Right to the City: a longer-term, strategic implementation plan with the City of London Police and all the City of London Corporation's key departments stakeholders, that will ensure women, girls and non-binary people have a meaningful role in shaping the future of the City. This positions the City as a leader in shaping a more inclusive urban future, one built on collaboration, care, and the lived experiences of its communities.

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APPENDIX A

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE ARTIST-LED WOMEN'S NIGHT WALKS

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY?

"It was an amazing experience to design and host this workshop with Clara and the Publica team. It felt empowering and fun and like we owned the City, even if for a brief moment."

"Taking time to wait in spaces, seeing, observing spaces I would never go to."

"Moments of stillness and writing."

"Casual, relaxed and supportive energy - it feels liberating to discuss a serious/important topic without being overly formal."

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"Openness and space for creativity."

"I enjoyed taking up space and feeling that I belonged. It was energising to be able to forget that I was in a scary place."

"The different positions, speeds, ways of moving and taking up space in the city. How colour and light correlate with my feelings and that of others as a shared experience."

"All the exercises are super fun! Feels like taking ownership of these spaces. And loving having a large group of people."

"Taking you out of your comfort zone to experience the City in a different way – embodiment of being powerful. I enjoyed the strength and beauty of the group and hearing everyone's thoughts."

"Feeling a sense of belonging amongst a group of strangers. The opportunity to play, be silly within collective self-consciousness."

"Collective sharing and creative practice."

"Taking up space, thinking about the City at night, spending time in a female space feeling safe and in solidarity together"

"Being in a room full of women, being creative, free and messy, being in a safe space"

"Bringing people together, exploring places, hearing people's experiences and how places made them feel and how feelings could be changed."

"I enjoyed the space created this evening, the vulnerability of making a character and a mask (sharing a story within a group of strangers) and then taking it to the streets."

"I really enjoyed the experimental and playful approach towards finding out about our feelings of (un)safety. Being able to collectively reclaim space that I would usually not go to, gave me a whole new feeling for the City and what it means to inhabit a female body."

HOW HAS YOUR PERCEPTION OF SAFETY CHANGED?

"I noticed the huge amount of CCTV cameras around Smithfield — which is creepy."

"Become a keener observer of public spaces."

"Deeper understanding of what type of urban furniture makes me feel less safe and more vulnerable."

"I feel less scared!"

"I am thinking more about pace and our bodily experience of space."

"Lights could change the way I feel in the dark alleys."

"I realised how much I am unable to enjoy nighttime, although it is my favourite part of the day."

"I felt like I could now be more confident in taking up space. But I am aware that a lot of those feelings probably would change if I was alone."

"It is comforting to know that other women experience similar things. Maybe,

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when walking down the road we can do something to make each other feel safer"

"I feel heard by the women and non-binary people around me. I think it can feel easy to feel alone in fear. This confirmed my thoughts and feelings of walking at night."

"I recognised how significantly being in a group changed my perception of the city and how I experience it."

"I think I will in future reclaim areas and try to walk with large groups of people and take on the night."

"I feel like I realised that feeling safe/unsafe is a very gendered experience, which has not only to do with the built environment, but also our socialisation."

"I am not alone in my experiences."

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT THE CITY OF LONDON?

"A type of maps app that showcases available safe routes at night, that avoid dark corners and cul-de-sac or dark residential complex."

"More considered routes at night, rather than just hotspots of activities"

"Clear viewpoints"

"Art in public spaces"

"Stop memorialising jack the ripper. More visibility to women and globalising narrative through public art, strategy, naming etc. Warmer lighting, different types of spaces"

"More access to these beautiful and small courtyards. I never knew all these small, beautiful fountains and courtyards existed because i had never ventured down alone."

"More open spaces and working water features!"

"Less CCTV, more eyes on the street, more mutual care and less policing."

"Other sensory elements, like smell, also impacted my perception of safety."

Perhaps proper maintenance of public spaces (or installing more public toilets?)
Could also help increase feeling of safety/belonging."

"More group walks, creating memories of the night."

"More ways to reach out to and support women who are alone/in distress. I would like a toolkit, training support on this."

"Being able to see or understand that there is an exit to an alley also helps. (Perhaps a signage indicating that the alley continues could help)."

"More signage, colourful boards, posters, artist work, art groups advertising."

SOUNDSCAPES FOR COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS

Clare

So, the nights are free
Bouncing echoes
Snug splashes
Insulated drilling
She's hidden in the city
Trailing along psychogeographic pathways
Finding her momentum, extending
Opening up her petals in the moonlight
Occupying the city
Occupying the night

Kate

I want to talk to everyone as deeply as I can
But something stops
A barrier
Courage trailing
Echoes of thoughts question my confidence
I become insulated
Unable to be free
To share hidden thoughts, fear, anxiety
But community builds as we share time, sharing fear, sharing anxiety, sharing space
Building support, building safety, extending friendship

Lou

When you look at a body, you see history -
But what of the histories the city has drilled into our bodies?
It echoes within me, trails the shadows around me -
Fits snug somewhere in the grip of my keys
And the fastening pace I see.
Fear's density is hidden so deep it has soundproofed the walls of me.
So, I reach. I remind myself to extend them open, gently:
So, there is room for my body to remember, and see.
To notice the way warm light bounces off the curves,
The splashing of a distant water,
The rustle of the wind in this tree.
It lodges itself somewhere deep that reminds me to breathe.
And suddenly the body remembers that this city
Belongs to me.

Lily-Flore

And so, the nights are free
Just for a moment
With echoes from the women I just met
Trailing around me

I feel almost hidden amongst the drilling sounds
I feel almost hopeful
We are insulated in a moment of calmness
And just for that hour I feel allowed to listen
And so, the nights are free
Just for a moment
With echoes from the women I just met
Trailing around me

Phoenix

Woman walking night
Solitary swan
Nothing trails behind
The water, the water
And I longing to hold the shape of the ripple and feel it fade into
Still water
On a Monday night, walking
And the moon is bright
There is one large stone amongst other little stones and
Looking down at a private gathering of daffodils
And I meaning you meaning me, circle a dreaming yellow brick road
And wait
Wait
For the sound of bird to distil the anxiety
Which is to say a pair of wrong eyes
His towering stride, his lingering gaze
Could shatter the serenity
But he doesn't linger
And I hold my breath under street light and moonlight
Hoping I am not betrayed by the darkness
And I am not betrayed by the darkness
The city is beautiful
You, the window, the silhouette of a potted monstera and fiddle leaf fig
The warm orange glow of home
I am not yet ready to go
There are no secrets between us
The night belongs to me
And soon I am alone again
And subdued again by the song in the footsteps across concrete
The tramped patches of grass
The wind has found the willows
And the moon is bright
Extend your light to me
There are petals hidden somewhere by the lake
Let us ask the echoes

SELECTED YOUTH DESIGN CHALLENGE VISIONS

SAVAGE GARDENS

Reimagining an alleyway is essentially reimagining a feeling. Looking down a dark alleyway, feeling eerie and too uncomfortable to go there, should not be a direction in my route. My alleyway reflects hope and a feeling of curiosity to explore the streets that engulf us. I want my streets to reflect me, to reflect my hope, my joy, and what I stand for. If I want to be a product of my environment, let it be a happy place, a green and welcoming place where there is light at the end of the tunnel. Let the tunnel be part of the light, part of the journey that inspires and fulfils me. My streets are me and I'm proud of myself as a light that wants to be found and not dreaded.

ARTISAN STREET

I would like to see the city as a place where people have the chance to do as they want. A place made by the people for the people, where we can love ourselves, other and the city itself.

BARBICAN, SCULPTURE COURT

This is a new and modernised version of the Sculpture Court. It is suitable for anyone and now has been made more suitable for young people, especially younger children. Understanding that this is a residential area, I have designed a calm, green space filled with plants and trees. The bumpy concrete can be used for anyone biking or skateboarding and pavements are there if anyone would like to go for a quick stroll. Colour was added to the buildings to make the area feel safer and more exciting. There is a flowing mini river that has fish inside, it's eco-friendly with a special mechanism. There are fish food stations if the public would like to feed them.

BARBICAN, SCULPTURE COURT

My aim was to create somewhere where no one can take over, but everyone is included and thought of. I added water features for summer when people are hot. I put in lighting for when it is dark, so people feel safe and benches for people who want to chill. I also added greenery to encourage biodiversity and added colour, so it is more interesting. I hope for everyone to be able to enjoy and appreciate this space.

CRUTCHED FRIAR'S JUNCTION

Lights stay on' is a highly illuminated space to avoid any intimidating corners or alleys. The space is committed to being lit up 24/7, powered by large solar panels. The space has an accessible water fountain, with a 'fruit vending machine' so people can access necessities 24/7. The space is labelled 'WALK HERE' to be welcoming and to punctuate the safe nature of the space. Though the bridge is functionally necessary, under the bridge is well-lit with structures and seating to re-invent the scary vibe of 'under the bridge'

PORTSOKEN

This is what I imagine my younger self would like the world to be.

OLD BROAD STREET

Light shines across busy streets,
People's faces glow,
Music makes you feel cosy
The smell of food fills your nose
No one tries to rip down the LGBTQ+ flag,
Which sways proudly in the wind.
You feel safe, knowing that if anything happens,
People will help you
And the light helps you see.

GOULSTON STREET

I see Goulston Street as a place where people can relax from the hustle and bustle of Whitechapel High Street. There is a street food market at the end of Goulston Street and dedicated areas for relaxation, a nice lunch with colleagues or friends, which would be very useful. I would also like this street to be greener and more colourful. I think students from the London Metropolitan will be happy to create graffiti projects or other designs to implement in the area, like benches, flowerbeds and installations.

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