

Walk and Talk: Background Briefing

What is Walk and Talk?

The 'Walk and Talk' initiative began in Central South area as part of the Borough Command Unit's proactive response to local concerns about violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The idea is simple. Local women, going for a walk with local female officers in their neighbourhood. There, officers can talk to local women about their experiences and concerns as well as hear their suggestions on how we can make them feel safer.

The idea arose from conversations with Chief Superintendent Colin Wingrove, Head of Central South's Borough Command Unit and HeForShe champion, members of the Forward Institute, and Acting Inspector Becky Perkins. Becky has led the initiative, alongside Acting Inspector Sam Honeyball, as the local Chair for Network of Women. We are

now rolling it out across the Met as part of our commitment to tackling violence against women and girls. An important part of our approach is to invite women and girls to tell us what they think needs to change, and to keep talking to us about what more we can do to improve their safety in London.

The initiative involves pairing a female dedicated ward officer (DWO) with a female member of public who either lives or works on the officer's ward or nearby.

How does it work?

Officers contact their "buddy" to arrange a time to meet for a minimum of 30 minutes. Often they will meet in a park or open space, but this is flexible and may include walking their buddy's route to work or to a transport hub they use. Usually the events take place early in the morning, or in the evening, as these are thought to be the times when women feel most

vulnerable because it's darker, there are fewer people around and often less traffic on the roads.

'Walk and Talk' focuses on encouraging open and constructive conversations between officers and their buddy.

We are also keen to learn about any reoccurring themes from these conversations and what we, along with our partners and others, can do to improve safety for women and girls.

We want them to be safe and feel safe in London. We want to know about concerns raised and ideas on how we can improve. While we cannot commit to making all suggested changes, we will recommend changes to partnership agencies when appropriate and, of course, look to improve what we are doing.

All officers are fully briefed before taking part and urged to be open and talk about their own experiences and thoughts, even if at times these can be difficult.

If any intelligence or crimes are alleged, officers need to be clear that they have a duty of care and report it in the usual way, while ensuring any safeguarding and signposting is completed.

Evaluation

We want to evaluate the effectiveness of Walk and Talk and capture feedback and concerns, both from the officers and their buddies, who are each asked to complete a survey. Information that has been provided has already supported a recent police and council bid for Safer Streets funding to improve lighting and CCTV.

So far over forty women have taken part in the initiative with more planned over coming weeks. We hope to continue bringing our officers together with women from all areas and backgrounds reflecting our diverse communities.

During a recent all-female VAWG operation, our HeForShe male allies also undertook foot and cycle patrols in the SE1 area and spoke to groups of women

about how they feel about their safety in London. The reaction about having conversations was largely positive and the male officers have provided feedback.

directly to ASMailbox-
NetworkofWomenNow@met.
police.uk

We want communities to regularly see and get to know their local officers, so that they have trust and confidence in them, knowing they are there to protect them and keep them safe.

StreetSafe

Members of public can also use “StreetSafe”, a website where they can anonymously tell police about areas where they feel or have felt unsafe but not report crime. More information can be found on the website.

www.police.uk/streetsafe
Members of public can also access their local ward team and find out what is happening in their area via www.met.police.uk/a/your-area

Get in touch

If you wish to take part in the ‘Walk and Talk’ scheme, please send an email