**What would you do if you see someone being harassed in a public place?**

Street harassment is on the rise and that is partly down to our culture of acceptance and tolerance of it. Crimes and harmful behaviours such as public sexual harassment and hate crime (including disability hate crime) are significantly under-reported. A key factor for this is the everyday nature of these crimes and incidents and the fact that they are deeply ingrained in our culture.

Yet no matter how serious the incidents may be, they pervade the lives of those who experience it relentlessly and are often likely to escalate if not addressed. But people are becoming more aware of it and the long-term implications it has on victims and whole communities. The tide of acceptance is turning.

Harassment often occurs in residential streets close to home, or in local parks and high streets when there are people around who may witness it. There are many reasons why they won’t intervene but now Neighbourhood Watch is leading on a national campaign to raise awareness of street harassment and the role those who witness it have in prevention.

Last year, Neighbourhood Watch members reported that over one-third of those that had experienced a crime in the past 12 months had been harassed, threatened, or verbally abused in the street – and that includes the elderly. Yet most people who experience it, don’t feel empowered to report it. Even more worrying than that, is that many feel responsible in some way themselves.

Neighbourhood Watch is calling for people who witness someone being harassed on the street - whether they are being intimidated or are having offensive gestures or comments made towards them – when it is safe for them to do so, ask the person experiencing it if they are okay. This lets them know that you stand by them, empowers the victim to report it, and sends a message of intolerance towards the crime. In this way we can start to turn that culture of acceptance around.

Neighbourhood Watch’s national website has more information on

* street harassment: <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/streetharassment>
* what it means to be an ‘active’ bystander: <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/activebystander>
* ways to intervene: <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/5Ds>
* video of a variety real people asking ‘Are you okay?’: <https://youtu.be/krqfuJZIoZc>