



**Women's Safety
In Our City**

**CHELMSFORD
CHARTER**

FOREWORD:

Councillor Rose Moore – Chelmsford City Council

Chelmsford's Women's Safety Charter came about through the passion and vision of some brilliant women of our city, but I hope it will be embraced by everyone. Whether you're a stakeholder, a local business, or a member of the public who visits, lives, or works in Chelmsford, creating a place where the safety of women and girls is paramount, and something we must all play a part in. No one person or organisation can do this alone. By working together, we become a more connected community.

Some may ask 'Why Chelmsford'? Now, our city doesn't have a high crime rate, but that's not really the point. Women and girls should have the absolute right to feel safe wherever they are. Our Women's Safety Charter is a statement from Chelmsford City Council and our partners that we will not tolerate behaviours that make women feel unsafe in our city at any time of the day or night.

This ground-breaking charter asks premises not just to sign up to a set of values, but to be active custodians of culture where women can feel confident that they will have a 'Capable Guardian' on their side and a safe space if they need it. The charter also comes with a campaign to start what may be uncomfortable conversations about things that men do that make women feel unsafe, sometimes without even realising it. These low-level behaviours, which are often explained away as being harmless, don't feel like that to women. In tolerating them, we make women feel less safe and we open the door for more serious transgressions to occur.

Our thanks to the many partners who have helped to bring this charter into being, and to the Home Office for Safer Streets funding which has helped this, and many other related projects become a reality. The words of our charter form a solid foundation. Now we must all take action to build confidence and knowledge to ensure that Chelmsford is fairer and more connected - recognised as a place where women can feel safe and supported 24/7.

Karen Whybro – Gender and Equality Consultant

I'm proud to be a resident and business owner here in Chelmsford as well as a campaigner and consultant working with Chelmsford City Council and Chelmsford For You BID to make our city an inclusive and safe city for women. I'm passionate about women's rights and equality and, for me, it's a basic expectation that women and girls should feel safe moving around our city. Too often, women adapt and change their behaviour because of the fear we face and it's clear that gender factors greatly in that. I want my city and everywhere else to be places where women and girls can identify safe spaces, knowing they will be prioritised, supported, and helped as and whenever needed. With this Charter, I believe Chelmsford can lead the way in implementing real change, culturally and practically, to make women's experiences positive whether living, working in or visiting our city.

Sara Tupper – BID Manager

Chelmsford For You is really proud to be involved in launching the Women's Safety Charter for Chelmsford. It has been great to be part of this initiative to support women's safety and ensure that women feel comfortable whenever, and wherever they choose to go out.

We know that being out at night can induce anxiety for women, with many having experienced some level of harassment. This needs to change, but it requires all of us to work together to improve the safety of women and everyone in our city, especially at night.

We are keen to work with our BID members to help provide safe spaces, where women will find, not only a friendly welcome, but a trained person who will be able to assist them if necessary. Alongside this, we want to encourage people to change their attitude and behaviour so that women never feel uncomfortable or unsafe when they are moving around the city or enjoying local venues.

We have worked together to produce the tools and resources necessary to implement change, as well as lobbying to improve lighting and infrastructure to make the city feel a safer place to be. We have created branding to highlight and raise awareness of the charter and we can't wait to see this displayed around Chelmsford very soon.

INTRODUCTION:

The Women's Safety in our City Charter has been developed as part of a wider campaign to address and improve how safe women feel in Chelmsford.

The aim of the campaign is to support and embed a cultural change in Chelmsford that provides strong and consistent support to women and girls and encourages everyone in our community to consider everyday situations from an alternative point of view, allowing them to see how their behaviour can impact others.

Violence against women and girls is unacceptable. These crimes are many and varied, including sexual offences, stalking and harassment. We know that these acts disproportionately affect women and girls, and we know that towns and cities in Essex are not immune to this reality.

Tackling violence against women and girls is a priority both nationally and locally, this campaign aims to support and enhance the policies being developed and implemented to ensure that experiences for women in our city are improved.

“SAFETY IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF THREAT - IT IS A PRESENCE OF CONNECTION” – Gabor Maté

WOMEN'S SAFETY AS A PRIORITY:

The Safer Chelmsford Partnership works hard to ensure our city is a safe place for visitors and residents to enjoy.

We are proud holders of Purple Flag status which is an international accreditation awarded to areas who strive to create safe and thriving locations at night for all users.

Following a successful bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund, Chelmsford City Council was awarded £550,000 to begin work on improving safety in our city.

The real, lived experiences of women have shaped our Women's Safety Charter, with research conducted in partnership with University of Essex to gather the views and experiences of residents and visitors to Chelmsford.

The research indicated that safety is a concern for everyone, but that women feel disproportionately at risk of experiencing harm, during the day as well as at night.

“I want my daughter to grow up knowing she is as safe as her male peers. I don't want to explain to her that she has to change her behaviour as I have done by whole life in order to be safe”

THE CHARTER:

As part of our commitment to improve the experiences of women in our city, Chelmsford City Council, Chelmsford For You BID and gender equality consultant, Karen Whybro, have created the Women's Safety Charter which brings together members of our community to deliver Safe Spaces around the city, with trained staff members who cultivate a safe environment for all.

Local businesses and organisations pledge to prioritise women's safety by ensuring their space is a safe, respectful, and inclusive place to be. Signing up to the Charter includes pledging their commitment to a range of tasks, training and continued professional development which ensures staff and members prioritise women's safety as a standard.

We believe that everybody has a role to play in creating and sustaining a respectful and inclusive culture for all and that Chelmsford is recognised as a progressive place, championing women's safety throughout the city.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

Every individual can play their part in making our community safer. It is our responsibility to keep ourselves safe but also to help sustain a culture where safety is a protected right for all.

Whether you're a business owner, manager of a team, community leader or member of any organisation in Chelmsford, you have a role to play in ensuring our city is a safe and welcoming place.

Every business or organisation who signs up to the Women's Safety Charter will benefit from a range of support to positively impact their space and the experience of everyone using it.

We will provide training for your team, guidance, support, and a bank of resources for you to use to help create and sustain a positive culture for women throughout your space and your team.

We will train your team on how to create a safe space for women, how to introduce and implement gender equality policies and practices and embed positive culture to ensure the Charter is effective in the long term.

THE PLEDGE:

Being part of Chelmsford's Women's Safety Charter requires a commitment from each business or organisation to make a pledge. The pledge forms the actions an organisation must take to be considered a "Safe Space".

This involves committing to staff culture training, considering physical changes to your space, and utilising a bank of resources to ensure your intentions towards making a safe space for women is prominent and clear.

Organisations are required to make 6 pledges, as follows to verify their space as safe for women:

- Allocate a nominated Charter Leader
- Train all staff members to become “custodians of culture”
- Clearly display campaign sticker and pledge to identify as a ‘safe space’
- Clearly display media which sets expectations of behaviour, both physically and online
- Signpost people who require support to the best source of help
- Consider making changes to physical space to promote safety

TOOLKIT, REPORTING + REVIEWING:

Every organisation committing to the Chelmsford Women’s Safety Charter will be provided access to a toolkit, which offers of resources and guidance to ensure that they are supported to meet the 6 pledges, from signing up, through to reviewing the impact of their safe space on women’s experiences long-term.

- Online bank of physical and digital media resources
- Audit for staff and visitors to identify what can be improved and what is working in your space
- Training for staff and members in creating a positive culture
- Resources for implementing positive change in the physical space and working policy and practice
- Support and information on organisations to signpost members/visitors to who may be in need