

# The GM Moving Podcast - Right to the Streets, Series 4, Episode Two: The power of Active Bystander Training

## Introduction

**Julie:** What we didn't want to make this into, and I never want this to make this into, something, some big heroic act, where we go and rescue a damsel in distress, face off to the harasser, and cause a big scene. So it was very much about simple things that we can do, everyday things that we can all do when we feel able to do so, to really send a message to the harasser that I see you and that's not okay, to the person being harassed, I see you and what they're doing isn't okay, but to other people around we can do something.

**Eve:** There are things we can all do to create safe, joyful and welcoming streets, parks and public spaces where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active. Hi, I'm Eve Holt, Strategic Director for Greater Manchester Moving. In this series, you'll hear about the work we've been doing with people and partners in Trafford, Greater Manchester, to trailblaze a different approach to street harassment, and gender based violence in public spaces.

(We live here, our families are here, and we want this to be a safe space for our children to grow up as well.)

**Eve:** You'll hear from lots of the people and partners involved, including local citizens, community leaders, politicians, commissioners. Sports organisations, artists, comms experts, facilitators, performers and many others who've all been playing an active role as part of a whole system approach to women's safety, shifting the dial from fear to freedom.

In this episode we explore the actions we can take as individual citizens in our communities to make our streets, parks and public spaces safer and more welcoming. And we'll explore the power of bystander training in equipping us as individuals with the knowledge and importantly the agency to act, to show we care and to help change men and boys

behaviour and shift the cultural norms that have normalised everyday harassment and fear on our streets.

So coming up, we speak to Julie, co founder of Freedom Personal Safety, a not for profit organisation that was commissioned by the Right to the Streets Partnership to deliver active bystander training to hundreds of people across North Trafford. We delve into what being an active bystander is all about, the training and what difference this is making.

**Julie:** Our dream and aspiration is that we are no longer needed because things like sexual harassment have become so taboo and unacceptable that we don't need to talk about it, we don't need to challenge it and that people are very much looking out for each other.

**Eve:** Later, I chat with Nicole and Dave from Transport for Greater Manchester, one of the many organisations that engaged in the training, and I get their take on the potential for active bystander training to make a real difference at scale for people getting about Greater Manchester by active and sustainable transport, and our growing Bee network.

**Dave:** It's all about raising awareness, not just for the staff, but for the general public. So if we can sort of enlist the general public in helping our staff. Imagine how much of a safe place the bus station would be if seventy percent of the people were active bystanders.

**Eve:** But first, I want to set some context and explain why we thought that active bystander training was key to the Right to the Streets approach.

Our Right to the Streets work is founded on the belief that we all have a role to play to make our streets safer and more welcoming for women and girls. We've therefore taken a whole systems approach to think about all the different things that influence whether or not women and girls feel safe from individual behaviour to social networks, organisations, the places and spaces we go, our physical environment, the policies that impact on our lives and the cultural norms.

We refer to these as different layers of the onion, or otherwise known as the socio ecological model. What we've done is design interventions that would work at each of these layers of the onion, starting with the individual. We know that participating in this work impacts us all at a

personal level. We want to move away from approaches that further burden, harm, disempower, and exclude women and girls and diverse communities, or that simply demonise men.

We want to shift towards forms of participation that instead connect, deliberate, heal, equip, include, and rehumanise, building individual capability, motivation, opportunity, and resources to take informed action with care. We've tested a number of different ways to do this, to include the participation walkabouts, which we talked about in the last episode, and today we're focusing on active bystander training.

We set out at the start of this work to grow a network of active bystanders and allies, people that are equipped to intervene, to pay attention and to take notice and take action when they see instances of harassment of all forms of sexual violence. What we've seen is that people genuinely want to help others but often don't feel equipped to intervene.

We set out a call to action to organisations who had expertise in this area and Freedom Personal Safety responded to the call and were commissioned to deliver how to be enacted bystander workshops to people living and working in the Trafford area. Freedom Personal Safety were able to bring their expertise and the 5Ds, as we'll hear about later, to equip people with information they need to act as citizens.

So let's hear more about what they've been doing and how, and the difference this is making.

## **Interview**

**Eve:** So I'm at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority headquarters in the heart of Manchester city centre. And I'm joined by Julie from Freedom Personal Safety.

**Julie:** I'm Julie Tweedale and I'm one half of Freedom Personal Safety. So we are a not for profit organisation established fifteen years ago. And our primary focus is ending and disrupting violence against women and girls. And we're so thrilled to be part of the project.

**Eve:** So what is active bystander training?

**Julie:** Well we actually call the session, how to be an active bystander, because it is really some very practical tips and techniques that people take away that they can use in their day to day life. And it's really about giving people permission and helping them to understand that it's not necessarily going up and facing off in front of somebody who's being very aggressive and being very threatening.

There are lots of other little things that you can do. And part of that is about, first of all, recognising what's going on. And that it's not okay. And it makes you feel uncomfortable, makes other people feel uncomfortable. And then it's about, like I say, taking a small action. It could be one word. It could be a glance.

And I found that rather than just having some guidance on a website, bringing people together in a room. To talk about things they've experienced, things they've witnessed, how they feel about these things. That's where the richness is really. And that is when people start to think, ah, yeah, maybe I could do something next time.

Or if I think back about that time on the tram, ah, yeah, that's what that other person was doing. So it makes it really rich, I think.

**Eve:** So tell us a little bit more about what you've been doing, who you've been working with, who's come to these sessions, where have they been?

**Julie:** Cause we're part of the project and we're using all of your amazing contacts across Trafford.

We've had a really rich variety of people coming. So we've been working with the Lancashire Cricket Club, the Manchester United Foundation, Foundation 92. We've had youth workers. We've had people from the St. John's Centre, volunteers and staff. And whilst all these people work and volunteer for these organisations.

They're also citizens and residents of Trafford. So this is not just come along to this field as part of your job. This has come along as a human being. So it's been so varied and we've got lots of other sessions coming up to with Transport for Greater Manchester with lots of council staff and local councillors. So, yeah, it's been fantastic.

**Eve:** So one of the questions as well, it's come up is then, well, what counts as, as harassment and sexual harassment and lots of people, maybe not taking account of the things that maybe feel that make us feel a bit uncomfortable might be seen as a low level and often maybe aren't put in the box, but actually all those micro moments all mount up to that sense of feeling like you don't belong, you're not welcome, you're not safe, you've got to be on guard. So have you noticed through the conversations that people are also widening the lens around what we actually mean when we talk about harassment and violence around women and girls.

**Julie:** Absolutely, and like I say, we always start off the session explaining what sexual harassment is. And there is a lot of terminology and people get confused between things like sexual harassment and sexual assault. So sexual assault on the whole is touching someone in a sexual way without permission.

Sexual harassment tends to be more verbal. So it's things like an unwanted comment about your appearance. It might be a wolf whistle. It might be that cat calling, you know, that, all right, gorgeous give us a smile. It can be someone standing too close. It can be just someone staring and it's that gradual buildup.

Those kinds of microaggressions that are happening sometimes weekly for people, sometimes three or four times a week, they build up and they do have an impact. And one of the things we do cover on the session is the impact that it has, in terms of our self esteem, in terms of normalising it, in terms of blaming ourself.

Well, it's my own fault. I shouldn't have worn this dress. Oh, why did I get the tram home, cause I know I've got that walk back to my flat. These things being choosing what we're able to wear and where we go out and the things that we do are a part of life. And we should be able to do these things without fear, without self blame when someone else chooses to disrespect us.

So very much in terms of informing people. This is what sexual harassment is. And in terms of the definition of sexual harassment, it very much focuses on how it lands with somebody. So, sometimes people will say, oh, it was only meant as a joke, it was a bit of banter. But actually, it's similar to bullying in that way.

If it lands with me and makes me feel uncomfortable, then I define it as sexual harassment. And to be honest with you, Eve, like I say, most people are good people. And if we realise that we've done something and you know what, we've probably all offended and upset somebody at some point in our lives.

I'm sure we have, we're human, we make mistakes. But if someone points that out to us, if somebody says, or their response in terms of their body language, or they look down and they look upset by that, we should accept that that didn't land well with them and respect that. And then have no further interaction with them.

It's about recognising that that kind of behavior and, and you use the word low level and it is in the grand scheme of things, low level.

**Eve:** And why focus on harassment in public spaces?

**Julie:** In work, we have protections, but in public spaces, we don't have those protections. So when it's happening in public spaces, it's not classed as a crime, which is why it's even more important that we feel empowered to challenge it and to support people who is experiencing it.

**Eve:** People will receive and hear things differently and might land differently and you don't know what their previous experiences are. You don't know what's going on for them. So again, it has to be personal, doesn't it? It has to be treated as recognising that it's how somebody, it feels for them.

It's what matters and not suggesting that if one person says, well I don't mind it when somebody wolf whistles, maybe there's somebody out there that doesn't mind, that doesn't mean that makes it okay. Cause that'll feel very different for a whole load of other people.

**Julie:** It's not about shutting down connections with people. I want to make that really clear because there's nothing more important I believe in life than connections with others. The connection we're having here today, the connection we're having with people listening, it is those connections that make life worth living.

And, saying hello to people and smiling and making eye contact is a lovely thing to do. If for some reason the person I make eye contact with or I smile with doesn't want to respond to me, doesn't want to look at me.

It doesn't return the smile. I just need to accept that. It's just about being respectful. That's a huge part of what we talk about.

**Eve:** I guess how have you, like, hooked people in? What is the key messages that you say this is relevant for you and this is what you'll get out of it?

**Julie:** It's really interesting because I think a lot of people, when they hear about sexual harassment, they think, oh, it's for women.

Because the first step, really, in being an active bystander, is understanding and realising that something isn't right. So you've got to know what to look out for and understand what sexual harassment is. Now, most women I speak to know what sexual harassment is from years and years of experience. So this is a course for everybody.

And that was actually a bit of a challenge for us to say, no, this is a course for everybody. So what's been brilliant is because we've had such a variety of organisations involved and individuals, we have had lots of men and women in different ages and different backgrounds and different cultures.

And it's been that realisation of, oh, okay. So this behaviour does have a real impact on people and it has an impact on us when we witness it too, and one of the things that I found fascinating, one of the activities we do on the course, and it was a question, it was like, what would freedom look like?

And the freedom they were referring to was there being no men on the earth for twenty four hours. Now, that's not me trying to exterminate men.

**Eve:** I'm glad you made that clear!

**Julie:** Cause some men are amazing. Most men are amazing. So we'd actually do this activity on the course. And I say, if there was no men on the earth for twenty four hours, what would be different for you?

And a lot of the guys would say, oh, well, it would feel a bit strange, because I always say, obviously we would allow you to be on there. We're not going to, yeah, it could get quite dark otherwise. So we say



you are allowed to be on the earth and they'd say, oh, it would feel a bit strange. But on the whole, most guys haven't got a lot to say on that.

When we go to the women , we get a list of, oh, I would walk home on my own. I would go out drinking with my friends. We'd have just a picnic in the park at midnight. I wouldn't care what I wore when I go out. I wouldn't have to think, have I got my flats on so I can run, should have my hair in a ponytail so I won't be grabbed from behind.

I can just go out and be, and sometimes you'll see the guys sat there going, what? Seriously, really? And it's a real kind of, whoah. And one of the things I always suggest to people towards the end of the course is, and I ask them to note down in their online calendar, in their diary, or just make a note, one thing that you're going to do take away from this.

And a month from now, just put it in your diary, just as a little reminder. And often people will say, and it does seem to be guys that will say, I'm going to talk to my daughters and my wife about this, or I had no idea. It's not like we're keeping it a secret. It's just women we live it from being quite young, but for guys, often they don't understand really what it feels like.

So that has been really, really important. And actually I think that then galvanizes people into action. And one of the things I love about this approach of being an active bystander is that individuals taking action, even if it's small action, like I say, like a word, like, whoa, or make an eye contact with somebody who's been targeted, individuals coming together are very, very powerful and one person does something, if we're waiting at a tram stop and somebody says something and I might go, ooh, and then someone else thinks, ooh she's just responded to that. I'm going to come and I'm going to say to her, Yeah, I saw that too. I heard that. Should we go and check she's okay. When the good people feel empowered and feel confident and feel strong and feel able to realize their power, when we come together, that really, really makes a difference. So, it's about empowering everyone else in communities to say, no, we don't want this here.

**Eve:** Certainly I've heard from people that have engaged in it, how it has opened up conversations, as you say, both in their workplaces, but also at home where so many people don't talk about the day to day experiences because we've just become so socialised.



It's the norm, isn't it? We don't talk about it because it's just, that's what you do every day. And you don't even think about it. And until you stop and you question and you're asked to think about how different it could be and imagine how different it could be if we didn't have that constant fear really of harassment.

So there's been the workshops, but it's also been a whole lot of other stuff that you've now helped shape and inform. So obviously we've had the campaign, which has included some big posters going up across Trafford. And they were very much taking some of the learning from the active bystander training.

And we've now got some wonderful little Z cards and other leaflets that are sharing some of the key kind of tips around being an active bystander. And obviously it's been the focus of our Instagram campaign as well. Could you talk a little bit about, I guess, how you've then helped take the learning from the training and distill that in these other resources and what the purpose of that is?

**Julie:** Well, what we didn't want to make this into, and I never want this to make this into is something. Some big heroic act where we go and rescue a damsel in distress and we charge in and we, like I say, face off to the harasser and cause a big scene. So it was very much about simple things that we can do everyday things that we can all do when we feel able to do so to really send a message to the harasser that I see you and that's not okay to the person being harassed. I see you and what they're doing isn't okay, but to other people around we can do something. So yeah, I just basically chatted like we're chatting now really with Diva, who were the creative agency who came up with all the amazing campaign materials.

I know a lot of the content, but the way they've shaped it and they've made it about ordinary people doing ordinary things with an extraordinary outcome, I just think is brilliant. I loved being part of that creative process. I'm glad they didn't ask me to design anything because it would have looked very different.

And I'm not quite sure how they did it. I guess they're just very, very skilled at what they do, but it was lovely being able to share some of the content from the sessions and see it then on these huge billboards and on Instagram and sharing that with, cause we promote it obviously in all

the sessions we're doing too. I didn't. Realise we were going to be doing that when we signed up to the project, but it was a joy. I loved it.

**Eve:** And none of us knew at the start exactly what would be the things that we're going to flow really, because we all want it to come from the community, obviously of North Trafford. And what came out quite quickly is actually that the tips and tools from the Active Bystander Training were such a powerful way of enabling everyone to play a role, and creating that sense of agency individually and collectively.

So it's been great to see how that has then permeated like lots of different elements of the project and helped create that ripple effect as well. Are there any stories that you've heard already just over the course of, what's only been like nine to twelve months of change, any aha moments in any of those sessions or any things that you've heard fed back where it has already made a change for somebody somewhere?

**Julie:** Well, in the very, very first training session, we ran back in January. There was a guy who came along to the session who contacted me a few weeks later. And what we do in the session is we look at different scenarios and what would you do and how would you respond? And we use the five D's methodology for active bystandership, which was created by an organisation called Right To Be who were based in the US who were brilliant and these five D's methodology.

So basically it's five different things you can do. So the first option is distract. And that's the example I'm going to give you. So we cause a distraction. So it might be if, let's say I'm waiting at the tram stop and I see someone being stared at, someone standing too close. And clearly that person's feeling uncomfortable.

I might just go up and ask them, does the tram stop at Cornbrook or just start a conversation with them. So what I'm doing is I'm disrupting the harassment. I make a connection with the person who's been targeted without saying, are you being harassed? Can I help you? So the person who's been targeted knows that I've made that connection.

The harasser probably realises, oh, hang on, are they on to me? So that's distract.

Then we have what we call delegate. So let's imagine I'm on the tram stop and someone's looking uncomfortable because another passenger

stood very close to them and staring at them. There might be other people on the tram stop and I might glance across and say, have you seen that person there?

Do you think she's okay? Should we go up and check? Should we go up and stand near her? So delegate is about getting someone else involved. That could be another passerby, or there could be somebody from Transport for Greater Manchester on the station. And I might just say, can I just mention what's going on down there? So it's about telling somebody else, getting someone else involved.

Our third D is document. So it might be that, we're back on this tram stop and this harassment's going on. And what I might do is take my phone out and just pretend I'm doing a selfie or I'm looking on my phone and just take a picture of what's going on.

All of these things, you have to feel comfortable doing them. And then it might be that I report that then to Transport for Greater Manchester, or I speak to the person who's been targeted when it's safe to do so and just say, oh, I've got a photograph and a description, or I might just make some notes.

So that's about documenting it. We never ever post those things online.

Then we have the direct, which is what a lot of people think active bystandership is. So that is either going up to the harasser or to the person being targeted and address the harassment. So I might go up to the harasser and just say I think you're standing too close. You need to step back a bit there. Or I might say to the person we targeted, are you okay with this person standing so close to you? Would you like to come and stand over here with me? There's a bit more room here. The difference is we give a statement to the harasser.

We tell them very short, very clear with the person who's been targeted. We ask them a question. It's going back to that word that you use, that agency. Would you like to come and stand here? Are you okay?

And our fifth D is delay. So, I witness the harassment happening and I keep an eye on what's going on. When the harasser moves away or, or gets on the tram or gets off the tram, I then go up to the person being targeted and just say, are you okay? I noticed what happened there and it made me feel uncomfortable. I just want to check you're okay. And that

can be incredibly powerful. Also for a lot of people means we don't have to intervene when the harasser is still there.

So on this very, very first training that we ran as part of the program, there was a guy there a few weeks later, he contacted me and said, oh, I did a distraction. And it happened to be on the tram. I know I'm talking a lot about the tram. It's just good. It's not because it always happens on the tram, but he happened to be on a tram and there was a young woman who's looking quite uncomfortable. And there was a guy stood very close to her.

He wasn't touching her, but our active bystander who'd been on the training and he said, because he'd been on the training, what he did was he had a rucksack on and he went and stood near where these two people were and he very exaggeratedly took off his rucksack. So actually accidentally on purpose nudging this guy out of the way and said, oh, sorry mate, and then stood in the area where they both were and made eye contact with young woman, but he was there and she knew she looked at him and she smiled at him and she knew what he'd done. And the harasser just took a few steps back and he was so thrilled that he'd been able to do that.

And there were lots and lots of other stories and things people have done, you know, people have said, I've told all my friends about the 5Ds, I've sent out the number that you can use on, on train services, the 61016 to report any kind of harassment. I've told all my friends and it's just lovely to be able to share these things with people and hear them sharing them with others so that we can spread the word really and get people talking about it. One of the reasons that sexual harassment is so pervasive and it's so dangerous. Is that it becomes normalised, it gets hidden.

And I almost say to people when they come on these sessions or when they're listening to this podcast, use this as the stimulus to talk to your mates when you go out for a drink. Oh, I was listening to this podcast and we're talking about bystander intervention and what you would do and have those conversations. Let's just make it common knowledge so we can say that sexual harassment isn't normal. We shouldn't be tolerating it. And let's just draw a line in the sand now.

**Eve:** Just listening to that example, it's moving actually. I just think how often, how many occasions certainly in my life would it have felt different

if somebody had felt able to do that and to have known that a sense of community and other people around you are looking out.

And then also all the times I'm sure we can all think of really where we've and we've not known what to do and how awful that feels, and you don't want to aggravate, but you also don't want to turn away. And just the difference, if you feel equipped as you are equipping people to be able to be active, that is the word, isn't it?

It's like really be active in those moments. As you say, we all feel better. It so quickly opens up a conversation that I think often hasn't happened and you just get stifled and nobody goes there because they don't know what they can do about it. So there's a big so what, which is fantastic.

So I guess the next question is, well then, so now what? Really, all of that, which is great. In the end, it's a bit of a drop in the ocean in terms of this is focused within working lots of great people and partners within a place. Both, what are the things that are happening that you can also already see are going to be kind of rippled out from this?

**Julie:** So what is happening on Thursday, I'm running the session with school nurses, think about all the schools they're going to be going into, and they're going to have a lot of those posters and those Z cards.

**Eve:** They are going to have goodie bags galore.

**Julie:** Loaded down with those things. Because, it's a huge potential there. And also, I mean, outside of the remit of the project, we've already made contact with Tracy Brabin, the mayor of West Yorkshire. She's supporting a big project over there about making parks safer for women and girls. So we're going to talk to them about the impact of not only the bystander training, but the whole project. So, yeah, look what you've started.

**Eve:** It gives me goosebumps.

**Julie:** We're unstoppable now because this cannot just stop here. And like I say, we've been doing this work previously, but really this has given us such an impetus to really, really strive forward with this. So just a huge thank you to you and the whole team for allowing us to be part of this really, and to develop as an organisation and our ideas and our approaches for this, because we're on a roll now.

**Eve:** Honestly, it's been such a joy and just watching the waves, I think the waves have changed.

**Julie:** Well, interestingly, from social media posts that we've put up, we've been approached by Mott McDonald, who are an engineering company, global engineering company, you have offices in Altrincham and in Manchester, and we're running sessions for their staff.

Once they get on board and again, we can expand that and roll that out because these are nationwide, global issues faced by people every day, everywhere, and we can all be active bystanders sometimes, even if we don't speak the same language as somebody. I remember when I was traveling as a young woman, I was sat, I was being hassled on a bus in Romania and there was a woman who had bags sat on the seat next to her and she looked up and she could see what was going on. We didn't speak the same language. She looked at me, she nodded, she put her bags on her knee and she tapped the seat. That was bystander, that was beautifully done. And I was so relieved and I was sat next to her and I felt safe.

The potential for this. We're talking world domination here. We started in North Trafford, but we're not ending here.

**Eve:** And I think when I think about what's one of the aspirations that I would hold for this is probably getting to a point where we're not using the term active bystander. Because one of the key themes has come out over and over again is that people feel free. They feel they belong. They feel welcome. They feel safe. They feel invited to be active in our streets and public spaces when they feel that they're part of what they describe in their word as a sense of community.

And ultimately that's what it's about isn't that is you're in a sense of community, all of us, you don't have to know each other. It doesn't have to be a familiar place, but we're looking out for each other. And we know how we can be active citizens, as you said before. And that that is just one of the things that we naturally all do.

We're equipped to be active in those moments, take care of each other. And it just becomes part of, again, the norm is that's what we do. And we all know how to act. So there's almost a wish that at some point, that's no longer needed as a separate term. But for the moment it feels so important because people aren't equipped and they, they don't feel they

can be active and they don't know what that looks and feels like, have you got any final aspirations for the future? What would, what does the dream look like and how do we get there?

**Julie:** The reason that myself and Elaine set up Freedom Personal Safety all those years ago was when we became mums. We wanted our children's experience to be different than ours and our dream and aspiration is that we are no longer needed because things like sexual harassment and all these things that are experienced have become so taboo and unacceptable that we don't need to talk about it. We don't need to challenge it. And that, like you say, people are very much looking out for each other. Ultimately we'd like Freedom Personal Safety, not to exist, which is in a way is quite sad, but we want our daughters and our sons and their sons and daughters to experience a more respectful way of life, really. We're not going to stop till we get there. So yeah, that's what drives us really.

## **Interview 2**

**Eve:** A respectful way of life. Isn't that an aspiration we can all get on board and aspire to?

Talking of getting on board, Judy mentioned there in our conversation about delivering active bystander training to a whole host of different people and organisations, including Transport for Greater Manchester. Transport for Greater Manchester run one of the biggest transport networks in the UK.

Looking after the Metrolink, which is Greater Manchester's tram, they also manage cycle hire schemes, bus stop shelters, cycling and walking infrastructure, and much more. It's estimated that 5.6 million journeys are made every day in Greater Manchester. So you can imagine the potential of every one of those journeys felt safe and welcoming for every passenger, and in fact, joyful.

Perhaps then we would see an increase in the number of people that were choosing to make those journeys via active or public transport. So how can the simple act of being an active bystander support people from getting from A to B?



Well, let's find out as I speak to Dave and Nicole from Transport for Greater Manchester or TFGM for short. So I'm joined in the studio by Dave.

**Dave:** My name's Dave, Dave Green. I'm Operational Duty Manager for Transport for Greater Manchester. Basically just involves looking after six bus stations and interchanges, approximately eighty staff.

**Eve:** And Nicole.

**Nicole:** I'm an Assistant Duty Manager. Used to be in stations, used to look after people in a similar way to Dave, but in the last year, I've been seconded over to projects.

So I've been looking after bus franchising. I don't know if you've heard the little thing called the Bee Network. That's just been launched over in Wigan and Bolton. So I've been supporting delivering that for our department.

**Eve:** So Nicole mentioned the Bee Network there. The Bee Network is Greater Manchester's integrated transport network made up of bus, tram, walking, wheeling and cycling routes across the region. At the point of speaking to Nicole and Dave, the network launch is only a few days old.

So we asked her what the last few weeks have been like.

**Nicole:** It's a massive, massive change, but it really is so exciting. It's been a busy couple of weeks, hasn't it? Understanding of

**Dave:** Understatement of the century, really. Yeah. It's been absolutely ...

**Nicole:** But good. And you know what? The people are embracing the change, aren't they? Which is fantastic. Cause it is a massive change for the whole organisation, but in particular, our department, cause they're on the frontline there on interchanges. They're dealing with the customers and it's been a massive change, but they've embraced it really well. The public have embraced it. Well, yeah, it's good.

**Dave:** It's the biggest change since deregulation in 1986.

**Eve:** Hashtag get on board.

**Nicole:** Yes. Yes. Brilliant.

**Dave:** Write that down.

**Julie:** Yeah, I can hear like the sense of pride really, actually an excitement from the two of you in the work.

**Dave:** There's been so much work gone into it. I mean, there's fundamental things that we've had to change within the organisation, not just the department that Nicole has really done from scratch. And nobody's ever done this before. So we never knew really how it was gonna. be received by the staff, let alone the customers. And it's been, well, it's a rollercoaster, I say as an understatement.

**Nicole:** You just wouldn't believe the amount of work that goes into it, but do you know, one of the things I've taken from the last couple of weeks is just the sense of team.

There's been this massive sense of just community within TFGM and GMCA. There's just been a lot, it just feels like we're all trying to get to this one place and it's just nice to feel that.

**Eve:** So there's a real sense of shared mission for an integrated transport network that works for everybody.

Yeah. First of all, I guess that point of the team and a sense of community, which is really coming across and is really important. So you've got your immediate teams. Can you give us a sense as well of the TFGM team, which I know is part of a bigger Greater Manchester family, as we've referred to then, what's the scale?

**Dave:** How many staff overall?

**Nicole:** There's well over a thousand staff within TFGM. I always say, when people ask me about my role in TFGM, I always say any job you can think of. there'll be a job at TFGM. There's something related to that, whether it's marketing, whether it's being a porter, whether it's web developer, there's something that anyone can do. That's the scale of it. It's a massive organisation, but also still feels quite intimate, which is strange. It does, doesn't it?

**Dave:** That sense of closeness is something we've managed to keep hold of, which is quite surprising, really. People don't think that TFGM runs buses and trams. We also look after traffic lights and highways.

**Nicole:** Well, it's the control room. We have a control room in head office, which has cameras looking after all the roads and making sure, just helping every area of the organisation, really, just to function well.

**Dave:** That's 24/7.

**Nicole:** That's 24/7.

**Dave:** 365 days a year.

**Eve:** It's phenomenal, isn't it? And does that include, if we think about all our bus operators, that's a whole other workforce, isn't it?

**Nicole:** That's a whole other workforce. So the operators are their own companies that they have their own employees. We have a little bit more control over what routes they do and things that they do. So we have managers that are responsible for the relationship between the operators, but that's a whole new workforce.

**Eve:** So we've got a sense of the size of the team, the workforce, and then I guess that wider influence as well. So there's all the bus operators. And in time, we're also talking about going to control in terms of our rails as well. So they might not be part of the same employed by TFGM, but in terms of influence over ways of working in terms of core values and principles and behaviours that is growing.

And that day-to-day interaction that people are gonna have across, again, as we said over the walk-in wheel and cycling on the metro, on the bus, on rail. Potentially they're gonna encounter somebody where there's an influence that you guys have got.

So the focus of this conversation is the active bystander training, which both of you we're involved in, you attended one of the sessions run by, the fantastic Julie at FPS and personal safety as part of the right to the streets initiative. So it'd be great to hear, I guess, first of all, why does that matter for you and your work?

**Dave:** Obviously, because we have so many different bus stations and interchanges that are staffed.

And the staff have come across instances, let's say, where they're aware of people being unfortunately assaulted and accosted and maybe felt uncomfortable because of other people's behaviours. From a work perspective, it would be a way that us as managers, because the training was given to us initially as managers and the plan really is to then filter that down to the operational staff on bus stations.

It was a good way of us to get an idea of just how the training would work as a smaller group of people first and then think about how we could then deliver it to the staff in a way that they could understand and also felt like they could embrace if you like because I spoke to a lot of staff since I'd done the training because it obviously quite passionate about it as we should be there was a lot of unanswered questions and a lot of stigma I think that surrounded what should we do and what are we allowed to do.

So for us as a group of people then it was a lot easier for us or me to then go and speak to staff knowing what I know now. I know exactly what you can and should do. It's invaluable that we've had that training and the information that was given to us is easily now passed on to staff. Because I can pass it on in a way that I can deliver properly. Because it was given to me in a way that I could sort of take apart and then put into my own words if you like.

**Nicole:** So I think one of the things that happens on stations is they just don't know what to do. It's that question of, we've got somebody there who's potentially vulnerable. And you get so many vulnerable people traveling through the bus network.

You get a massive amount of vulnerable people. And we've all been there, haven't we? We've been on a station, there's been a young girl or a woman, and you're just not sure where, what do I do? Where can I point them to? We get a lot of young girls who don't want to go home, but if you call the police, that's what they're going to do. They're going to take them home. Yeah. It was just a way for our staff to feel like they could do something without having to do some, you are doing something, but it's that knowing how to do it and in the ways you can do something without actually putting yourself in a position, there was a little bit of a stigma wasn't there about, I think it's more to do with the focus on

women and girls and that obviously the course is vulnerable boys and these vulnerable men that goes without saying, but the focus of this is, was women and girls. I think that's where a little bit of the misunderstanding came from. We broke it down and Julie did it was everyone understood then. And they came into it, I think with a few ...

**Dave:** There was a little bit of, maybe a few doubts and a little bit of speculation with a couple of managers. Yeah. I think before she'd got halfway through the training, you could see that had gone. Yeah, changed completely. And how could you not? Because of the way it was delivered and the way it was explained. It's a no brainer for anybody really.

**Nicole:** And that in itself is just winning to me. Even if that's all somebody took from it, is that a little misconception was changed. That in itself is just...

**Dave:** Because they would go away and speak to their own staff teams, hopefully, in a different way than they would have done if they had never had the training. So that's invaluable for a start. But I think we need to get the same message to us all as a management team first, and we start there.

**Nicole:** We'd love to get Julie back and deliver it because I think her way of delivering it is brilliant. But if we can't, for whatever reason, we've got, like Dave said, he'd happily, he feels like, because she sent over so many materials afterwards and things that we could use, which was fantastic.

**Eve:** Why does that matter for you personally?

**Dave:** My sister suffered horrendous domestic abuse when she was younger, to the point where she was hospitalised several times by an abusive partner. But it's not just about the domestic violence side, it's about trying to be there for somebody in any capacity that you can be just to make them feel a little bit more safe.

Our staff with the high viz, just somebody to stand next to. You don't have to say or do really anything. And that's the beauty of this active bystanding. So the two words are so correlated together. So you can be active, but just standing by if you like. I explain that to staff. You could also see this bit of a sigh coming out of him as if he's saying, all right, I

can actually do something without doing anything. And then the difference you could make, I think, to a person who probably might be in one of the worst positions they've ever been in could be massive by just being there really.

**Nicole:** For me personally, I'm a woman and I've been there and I've been in this situation. There's been times where I think it would have been great to have someone who was being an active bystander, and I have two little boys and I want them to grow up. It's weird because people say, well, I have daughters, but it's not with the boys. I think it's so important to teach them.

**Dave:** That's a really good point. What you've made, the emphasis is on women and young girls, the safety and the fact that they have a right to the streets as we're saying, but they also, the emphasis also should be on the male element because that is unfortunately what creates the reason that we're here right now, unfortunately. So as a man, anyway, I don't want to be one of those statistical elements in that. I want to be somebody who does something positive about it. Not that creates any sort of issue for women and girls. So, but the guy's got the big parts of playing it to make these girls feel like they've got a right to be there.

**Nicole:** And it starts from them being young. And that's what I think with the boys, because words like active bystander, when we were younger, just weren't a thing that anybody was talking about or discussing. Whereas, I can have. I mean, their nine and seven now, so I've got a little bit of time yet, but I'll be armed with the knowledge as they get older and into their teen years to arm them with, look out for people, look out for me, look out for everybody. But if you see somebody, I want them to be young boys, teenagers, men that can support.

**Eve:** Which comes back to what you said earlier around, again, a sense of a team and sense of community. So how does everybody feel equipped to play their role as part of a community in which we're proud in Greater Manchester that we care for each other. We want people to be able to get about, to get on board safely in a way that's welcoming and it's sociable and they feel comfortable.

**Nicole:** It's one of our customer commitments is to be able to travel safely.

**Dave:** Safe environment for people. If you think about how much travel plays in people's lives, it's essential for a lot of people, both from work and a leisure.

And if you think, if some people can't actually just go about their daily business or go out and enjoy themselves with their friends for fear of actually being in a position as part of that journey where, oh my I've got to go here and get a bus or go on that tram platform.

And last time this happened, it's just unthinkable that we're investing all this money. Millions of pounds of public money into the Bee Network. And if it's not a safe environment for people, which I'm not saying it isn't, but we need to make sure it's definitely is, then, you know, why are we doing it?

**Nicole:** So even people just going to work. A lot of young people, if they're at university, when I was at university, I worked in a bar. And I used to get public transport quite a bit until something happened and I was like, okay, I'm going to drive in now. So then I used to drive and pay to park. A lot of young women will work till eleven o'clock. I mean, I used to work till 1 in the morning every Friday night and I used to do this walk.

It was in a bar in Deansgate. I used to walk from there to the car park at Victoria. I'd never wear earphones. I'd never, I'd always walk the longest way with the most light and things. You wouldn't think that would you, you just walk talking to Dave, you just walk where, you know, so it was just, it's things like that, that we want to, we just need to make it safe for everyone as safe as we can.

**Dave:** And we do need to change that mindset. We do need to make people feel like they can go where they want to go without thinking that something negative is going to happen. And you go back to the staffing, our staff are proud of where they work. And part of that pride and part of that, I think, fulfillment of their own role is going to be.

Looking after people when we have quite an element of antisocial behaviour, unfortunately, and that does play quite heavily on staff if they do feel like to a degree I'd go as far as to say they do feel like they're failing sometimes because, they're not police people they can't actually go and physically move people off bus stations for causing antisocial behaviour but if we can get them to feel that just for a small moment that



can help somebody and make them feel more at ease, and more comfortable, and you can't put a price on it, it's invaluable.

**Eve:** So any examples since participating in the training from either personally or others in the workforce of anything that people have done differently?

**Dave:** Ashton bus station, we do have quite a lot of antisocial behaviour there, unfortunately. One particular staff member did go out and put himself in a position that he thought was appropriate with this young girl who was getting a bit of aggravation, let's say from a male. Turned out it was a brother though, which doesn't make any difference that the relationship between the two people is irrelevant. It's how the person's feeling or how potentially you think they might be feeling at the time. So he was there and he didn't really do or say anything.

He just stood there like we've mentioned before in his high vis, looking like he's supposed to be there to do something. The guy actually then stopped giving this girl grief, really, and left. And the girl actually came to him and said, thanks very much for that. And he said, well, I didn't really do anything.

She said, but she said, well, but you did. Which is, again, you don't have to do anything to do something. It sounds like a bit cliché, but, it's so true. The conversation we had a couple of days later when he was telling me about it was quite nice because he's saying, I can't believe how fulfilling that was.

Just by not really doing anything. And as a man, to be able to sort of like, do something like that for a female, really, I think, it's, I don't know, something I can't really explain. Because you really do feel like you've done something that you shouldn't really have to do, but so glad that you could. Again, the high vis thing for us, for our staff to have some sort of high vis on body camera, always makes a bit of a difference.

If we put people out there with their uniform on, and body cams, etc, just to stand around. In close proximity to people that they think might be having a little bit of grief. Does make a real difference. And it works for them. It worked for this young girl and it worked for him. So both people got so much out of it.

There has been a couple of instances where staff has said that they've gone out and stood around. And again, I can't stress how simple it is sometimes to be an active bystander. Because you don't really need to do a great deal.

**Nicole:** I actually told my partner about it. He was like, what is an active bystander? So I explained it to him. Didn't really think he'd take it on board or think anything of it. But then it might have been about two weeks later, he came home he'd gone to Aldi shopping and he came home and said, oh there was some guy and this woman having a massive argument. I was like, oh right. He goes, yeah so I just pulled up in the car next to their car.

And I was like, sounds like you were just an active bystander and he denied it. He denied that I did any influence whatsoever, but I know I did. A thousand percent did. It was like, that's exactly what I was saying. It's just, pulling up or just doing something to just be there so nothing happened they got in the car and I said what she the person would have noticed that you were there So, you know, sometimes you can't rectify a situation, but it doesn't mean you shouldn't try, the likelihood is they might get in the car. But you might have put something in the guy's head that people are watching you might put something in the female that people are watching. It can just trigger some little thing in your brain to just on both sides that might have a bit of a butterfly effect.

**Nicole:** Yeah. So he was an active bystander. He won't admit it, but he was.

**Eve:** It's powerful, isn't it?

**Nicole:** It is. Yeah, it really is.

**Eve:** So being given the permission to know what you can do that isn't going to cause further problems, it is going to be reassuring. Often actually, unfortunately, we do need to be given that little nudge of that bit of permission to go, yeah, do this and this will help.

**Dave:** And I think that's vital that we pass the message on to all our staff, however we do that. But as soon as we've spoke to them, like the people I've spoke to do feel okay. The manager said we can, it's simple thing. I've just said you can do whatever you feel necessary to do. Just stand about, don't say or do anything. Just be there.

**Nicole:** Well, that's the thing. I think our staff on stations have been doing this for a long time without realising they're doing it. They have been active bystanders for ten, twenty, thirty, however long they've worked for TFGM. But the difference is. It can feel to them like they're not doing anything by just watching, whereas this, it almost gives them the, no, but this is doing something, it's telling them that the effect that them just being an active bystander is doing.

So, I think that's what our staff will take away from it, because it is something they naturally do, I mean, their job is the safety of the station, that is their job, so that's infrastructure, it's all different kinds of things, but one of that, a big part of that is the people. So it is something they have naturally done, but I think putting a phrase to it or a word to it will just give them a little bit of a boost that you are doing something by just being there and being present or following the five D's.

**Nicole:** They're doing something and it's nothing new to them, is it?

**Eve:** So you've talked about a few of the things in terms of what next. It sounds like you're already cracking on in some ways with the almost the train the trainer to enable that growth and scale. I guess is there anything else that you think actually this would be really useful for us now with people who are clear advocates.

So we've got a couple of people in the audience who want to see this grow but recognise all, I guess, all the limitations on people's time and challenges when you've got other pressures, what's going to really help to spread this to all people, all places and across the workforce?

**Dave:** What we have quite often, we do it with the TravelSafe, don't we, all the time.

They'll come into bus stations and interchanges and sort of set up a little bit of a display, if you like, with somebody there that can talk to people about not just the active bystanding though, but maybe if people feel like they're vulnerable, maybe give advice too. It's all about raising awareness, not just for the staff, but for the general public.

Because how many active bystanders could we get in a bus station full of people? If you're stood in a queue of twenty people and somebody's getting a bit of grief, you've potentially got eighteen more active bystanders there that could at least just do something. And out of those,

you could think that at least one or two of them will be quite happy to intervene.

**Dave:** So if we can enlist the general public, in helping our staff, imagine how much of a safe place the bus station would be if seventy percent of the people were active bystanders. But the people that will benefit from it are not just people that will probably then become active bystanders, or at least for that day or for that hour or two hours, that's in their mind.

And how many active bystanders might we get just for the next couple of hours? And how many vulnerable people, females, girls, will probably feel not so vulnerable, knowing that there's a big display there talking about the things that they've gone through over the last couple of weeks. So we could educate the general public into helping us, but also make the people that we're there for have that right to the street again, because thinking, wow, doing this for me, they've all got daughters and wives and mums and stuff. So, if we play on that, do the emotional thing, it's a on tap. You've got all those people.

**Nicole:** It's the key, isn't it? Because I mean, our staff are on stations and interchanges, and we've got a rail station as well in Horwich, but there's that travel in between that is the general public, and we have to somehow get them on board with this and get them to also take accountability for feeling there, for keeping the network safe for themselves and for everybody else, we can do, all that we can do, but we're not always there, our staff can't always be there because they're static in the interchanges.

I think in the immediate future, we have a new as part of the Bee Network, we have a group called the TESO's now and they're part of that safety commitment, aren't they? And they are on stations and they will be patrolling at some point and using the network. I want to get them trained as soon as possible.

I'm in contact with their manager about that because that is their role. And I think they'll know a lot of it already, but just again to reinforce things. I think that's an immediate thing because, that is literally their role is going around and trying to keep things safe and going onto buses and they will be traveling the network unlike our guys at the moment who are in the interchanges.

So I think that's an immediate thing we need to get them trained on. It's a culture change, if anything. Not even a culture change because it is something I think a lot of people do, they just don't know they're doing it. Or they think about it and think, oh, this is going to do nothing, so what's the point?

So they just carry on with their day, whereas if they realise the cause and effect that it can have, I think people will. Because people do, they want to look after each other, don't they? It's not, we're not a bad bunch of people. I know the news will tell you differently, but we're not as a whole. So I just think it's getting the message out that this is good. This is positive and this will help even if you don't think it will, it will.

**Dave:** One other thing I think we could tap into, but it'd be more of an inter agency piece of work really is, I think we talked about Foundation 92.

**Nicole:** Yeah.

**Dave:** Is a youth engagement team we work with, you've probably heard of them, and they come to most bus stations around the county, liaising and interacting with potentially problematic teenagers that cause antisocial behaviour, boys and girls. I have no doubt that within those groups of people, you've had vulnerable young girls having grief off the lads that they hang around with all the time.

We all know that these things, unfortunately, take place, and it might be a reeducation or re-education for the potential aggressors to make them aware of the impact that they have on young girls and potentially women as they and girls get older. So the Foundation 92 people could be sort of an extension of the active bystander theme, if you like. I'm not saying we should paint them as bad people, but it does no harm to give somebody some information that they may or may not read. And again...

**Nicole:** It's that teaching, isn't it? It's like I said with my boys, it's just teaching. Sometimes people don't know what they're doing is wrong, or they don't know how to approach, I think a lot of young guys don't know how to approach girls.

It's the first time or like, you know, if you're fourteen years, fifteen years old or whatever, you don't know, so they can do it in an aggressive way

or they can do it in a way that feels intimidating or whatever it is. And it is just those, it's just that teaching.

**Eve:** Yes, to all of that, it gives me goosebumps, I mean, I think of my three teenage boys and, them being aware of their own behaviour, but also, they've talked about how hard it can feel to challenge your mates and, how being equipped again with this stuff can help, how to act and, how powerful that is really, so.

**Dave:** And it all takes changing the mindset of one boy in a group, maybe the dominant male in that. And the whole group changes, the girls feel brilliant in the group, the lads don't really know they're doing it, but they follow the lead of the alpha male, if you like.

**Eve:** Just shifts the dynamics in that culture, doesn't it? Just break those cycles.

**Dave:** And then you've got a bigger ripple effect after that, because you take that group and they might talk to their mates, and before you know it grows exponentially, doesn't it really.

**Eve:** And we have heard, women and girls talk about how it's equipped them to feel like they've got agency to intervene, to be active bystanders. So just to make that point as well, it's very much about we all can then play a role and you don't have to be six foot. And that's what the training teaches you that you can, whoever you are...

**Dave:** If you go back to the bus station thing I was talking about, put a stand there. We could include the staff and anybody, if we could get the message to vulnerable girls and women that if you are feeling a little bit out of sorts, this is who you come to.

Go to this window, there's a point of contact, there's a person in a yellow coat, you can say, can I just stand here with you for a minute because I don't feel comfy. So you become the active bystander because they've approached you. So it's a simple thing.

## **Outro**

**Eve:** Well that was such a joy to speak to Dave and Nicole, and so reassuring to know that we've got passionate people like them in

organisations like TFGM, who are really stepping up to crack down on unwanted sexual harassment.

For more about the Bee Network and the region's commitment to travel safety, have a listen to the Active Travel episode in the previous series of the Right to the Streets podcast, where I speak to Active Travel Commissioner Dame Sarah Storey and Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester, Vernon Everitt.

So that's it for this episode. A big thanks for listening. If you're interested in Active Bystander training, do get in touch with us with FPS to find out more. As Julie said, we've also created a whole host of different resources that are freely available so that you yourself could help share and deliver active bystander training to people in your workplace or your community at no cost.

We really wanted to show you and bring to life what's possible when you equip people with the knowledge and confidence to bring about small changes that can often create a huge impact for someone that's experiencing harassment. And over time, hopefully put an end to these behaviours entirely. This podcast and the whole of the Right to the Streets project is just the start of the conversation, so we'd love to hear from you.

Have you ever intervened when you've witnessed forms of harassment? Has anyone ever intervened when you've been the victim of harassment on our streets, parks or public spaces, or perhaps when travelling around by public transport? We'd love to hear from you. We'd love to know what works and what you'd like to see happen next to help spread and scale so that more people can play an active role as active bystanders in their communities, streets and in their workplaces.

We're looking at different places that we can go to help spread the word. Be that friends of parks groups, other community groups, different types of businesses and workplaces, more sports groups, youth groups, the beauty of active bystander training is applicable to anybody, anywhere, at any time. And it only takes a couple of hours to equip people with some real tools that can make a big difference.

And you know what? It feels good. Whatever your thoughts, let us know. And we'll share them on future episodes of this podcast. We've got a few ways you can get in touch. You can tell us on social media, we are on



Facebook and Twitter. Simply search GM Moving. And finally, a big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this brilliant episode.

This Right to the Street series of the GM Moving podcast is just one element. of the Right to the Streets initiative, led by Greater Manchester Moving, Trafford Council, Open Data Manchester and other GM Moving partners, with thanks to funding from the Home Office that supported this work through the Safer Streets Fund.

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