Right To The Street Podcast

Young People

Introduction

Eve: Welcome to the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving Podcast. Join the conversation about what makes our streets, parks, and public spaces joyful, welcoming places for people to be and to be active. Join me, Eve Holt, Strategic Leader at Greater Sport on the journey around the streets as we explore people's freedom to move about without fear.

In each episode, we hear about the roles we can all play to make where we live, work, and play places where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active. We gather stories, experiences, and ideas as we speak to strategic leaders, decision makers, and lots of local people who are creating the conditions in place for everyday moving and active lives for all.

This episode is all about young people. Their experiences of our streets and public spaces and the roles that they can play in making places more welcoming and joyful for everyone. We are powerfully reminded of how far we still need to go to end, the normalisation of misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, and other forms of prejudice, discrimination and harassment, which leave many of our young people feeling fearful and unsafe on our streets and hinder their freedom to be active.

We also explore some of the cultural changes and trends, which have changed the way that young people interact with each other and with their physical environment. We hear about some of the ingredients that are key to creating safe, welcoming spaces for young people, like a community vibe, building relationships between young people and the adults in their neighborhood, so they see familiar people around and about.

And having other authority figures present in the local area, like youth workers and sports coaches who can facilitate stuff to do locally and be relied upon to act as active bystanders. In previous episodes in this series, you've heard multiple times that young people are getting it right when it comes to addressing safety for women and girls.

And that the younger generation are a key ingredients in shaping our collective vision for a world where women, girls, and everyone can live in communities

where they feel joy, safe, and feel they belong. But what does this actually mean? How are young people getting it right? And how do we ensure that their voices are heard when we are shaping this vision for the future?

So coming up, you'll hear from a group of individuals who are all working with young people or on youth projects in Trafford and across Greater Manchester. We chat about how the world is changing and how our experiences as young people are significantly different to young people's experiences today,

Mark Nesbitt: None of us were afraid of the streets. We were afraid of some people, but when I grew up, we was never in the house. We was always on the street. We was always with friends and we didn't need to re-own them or own them. There's just places to be.

Eve: And why it's important to listen to young people.

Catherine Martland: The aspiration is to hear from young people and get their views and, and work with them to make spaces that they feel they've been involved in creating. Cause if you feel that that community is yours, then you'll look after it.

Eve: And some examples of where youth engagement is working.

Michael Phipps: Eighteen months ago, we started doing community engagement on an estate, five years ago, their community centre shut down. And that used to have a local dad that had done the boxing in there for thirty years.

And we identified four Mums and four Dad's who, and we've put them through their boxing coaching level one, they've now reestablished his boxing club, which shut down five years ago. And the anti-social behaviours dropped.

Eve: But first it would be really silly to do an episode about young people without talking to some young people.

In our last episode, you heard Councillor Jo Harding talk about a wonderful group of students from Stretford High School who were taking positive action following a street harassment incident they'd experienced. We thought we'd love to hear their story, experiences, and ideas for the future, and the role that the school is playing in helping all of its students to feel safe on and off campus.

Interview 1

And that's where you join us now.

Sana: My name's Sana, and I'm fourteen.

Sidra: My name's Sidra, and I'm fourteen.

Jeremy: My name's Jeremy and I'm fourteen.

Omaima: My name's Omaima, and I'm Fifteen.

Sarah: And I'm Sarah and I'm an Assistant Head Teacher at Stretford High.

Eve: Should I come to you first is it Omaima? And do you want to just tell us about, first of all, your experience of, there's a Duke of Edinburgh?

Omaima: Yeah. Duke of Edinburgh.

Eve: Do you want to talk us through that story?

Omaima: Me and my group of the people I was doing D of E with and there were two groups. It was my group and Sidra's group actually. So we were together and then we were screaming at each other cause we met each other.

So we were really happy that we met each other. And then some builder who was working on the sites and everything, he just screamed. He goes, 'I'll come down there and make you guys scream.' And he was doing some weird actions and everything. Of course we got scared and he goes, 'oh yeah, I'm coming down.'

So there's a bridge and he comes walking, coming down to us and there was just a few stairs until he could get to us. And of course we are all scared. We just run and with these heavy bugs on our backs, we run. And then after we saw Mr. Hurst and Mr. Hurst, of course he had to report it and everything.

And it was really scary cause he goes, I'll come in your tent. And it was just really scary cause first of all, I've been through an experience before as well, but it's just scary cause there was no one there, there's no parents and no teachers or anything.

Eve: What an awful experience. I'm so sorry.

Sidra: If he has children or something and he's making young girls feel this way, it's not alright.

Omaima: It's really scary cause as well, I started a recording and we were all asking questions just in case we were just hearing stuff. So we kept asking the same thing. He kept saying the same thing back. So I showed it to my Mum and my Dad and everything and they thought I would be safe.

It's D of E, it's part of a school trip and everything and it's for experience and everything. But they were scared for me as well. I found it so stupid that the guy would actually say stuff about us. We were fourteen, thirteen at that time. There was other people on that site, they didn't tell him to stop, didn't tell him oh, they're young people stop it and let them all carry on. No, they laughed with him. It shouldn't happen again.

Eve: So it was a group of construction workers?

Omaima: Yeah.

Eve: And how many do you think?

Omaima: There were a few of them, but they were all over the place. There was one who was like mainly doing it, but I think there was about seven of them all together.

Eve: And were they all men?

Omaima: Yeah, they're all men.

Eve: And whereabouts were you? So just describe the location.

Omaima: We were like walking down the canal. So they were on like the other side of the canal in Altrincham from like Timperley to like Dunham Massey.

Sidra: And it's normalised actually. It's really normalised. And it shouldn't be normalised.

Yeah. Cause it's traumatic experience. I don't wanna go outside on my own or just go to the park.

Eve: So going back to that instant, how many of you were there in the group at the time?

Omaima: Yeah, about eight or ten or something.

Eve: And then you ran away with your big heavy bags?

Omaima: Yeah.

Eve: And went and reported it to, is it Mr. Hurst?

Omaima: Yeah. We were sat down eating on the canal. Cause it was a nice place. It was a nice view.

Eve: And what happened? So when you told Mr. Hurst…

Omaima: He was disgusted, he was mad, he was angry. I mean, I don't blame him though. The thing is I'm really happy that he did something about it.

Eve: Yeah. So what did he do?

Omaima: He of course reported it to the councils and then he got Andy, I don't how to say his name.

Eve: Andy Burnham.

Omaima: Yeah. He got him involved and it was just really good seeing him that he actually cared and everything.

Sidra: So I think it's as well, because I think Mr. Hurst has children and feels the same for like other parents who feel like their children will be in danger when it's a school trip.

Eve: And the point of D of E is about growing our independence, isn't it? In a sense of freedom to be able to go and access the world. So immediately that has been curtailed, that's been stopped by that experience. So Jeremy, were you in the group as well at the time?

Jeremy: No, I wasn't.

Eve: You weren't there, but have you heard about what happened?

Jeremy: I didn't, no. This is the first time.

Eve: Is this the first time? So what does it make you think when you're listening?

Jeremy: Quite disgusted cause I don't see why anyone would do that.

Eve: Do you ever, are you aware of men making comments, whether it's, I guess to women and girls or also to boys and men as well?

Jeremy: Not really. I don't really travel too far away from my house, so it's like I don't really see like bad parts.

Sana: Cause of culture as well. Culture brings up to this as well, like if you are wearing like a dress that shows like a little bit of your hands or a little bit of your ankles or something, there'll be people like that, know your mom or something and you who comment on it. Could make my Mum feel uncomfortable and everything. But yeah, it's just stupid to be honest.

Eve: Because you're obviously wearing a headscarf and therefore you've got visible faith, really. And do you find experiences as being then as a Muslim woman that, do people comment on that?

Sana: It makes me so upset. Cause like I'm trying my hardest to become a proper Muslim. I'm not the best. I'm still working on it. Like I don't pray five times a day. I try my best and everything.

Sidra: Obviously I'm like half black. I'm African and Caribbean. And I think racism is still a big problem. Obviously. It's not as bad as it used to be. But you still get people who just say things unnecessarily.

Omaima: And it's so normalised as well. Just like using the N word and And people say it in school as well.

Sidra: Exactly. And they don't, and people don't say anything about it.

Omaima: Exactly. Cause I've had someone go around saying, oh she makes my shirts because she picks cotton and stuff like that. And I'm like, I don't get why people feel they need to say it because you're not getting anything out of it.

Eve: It's awful, isn't it like listening. I'm sure people listening it's really upsetting actually. Do you think these are your experiences?

Sidra: Especially cause we're just in a high school and we're getting these comments it's so bad, especially in school, how she's experienced racism and how I've been called stuff because I'm Pakistani and they may seem, I find that as a joke or they say, oh yeah, you've got a towel on your head. Like it's not funny.

Eve: So how do we change that culture? Cause that all points to a culture, doesn't it? That people are stopping you from feeling that you are welcome, that you belong, that you have an absolute right to just get about. Whether it's school or places, and to feel free. And like that freedom is so important.

So there's the actions that you've taken, and first of all like just well done for like reporting that. I'm really pleased. Obviously you had a teacher that took that seriously and, validated that experience of yours and that that's been taken on, then taken to the police. And I know you've had, say you've had Councillor Joanne Harding who's exec member in Trafford and you've had Andy Burnham as the Mayor of Greater Manchester come to the school, haven't they, and listened to your experience and talk about campaigns in Trafford and and in Greater Manchester to really tackle some of that misogyny and sexism and harassment on our streets. You've managed to already be a real catalyst for change. Are there other things that you would like to see change?

Jeremy: I think there needs to be harsher punishments, on the people who are doing these things. Cause if they can just get away with it every time, then they're just gonna keep on doing it and not change.

Eve: Do you hear people challenging? Cause it's very hard, isn't it? It shouldn't necessarily be left to you to be the one that has to say something. It's often about having other people who are your friends, your allies, your bystanders who can challenge. That can be really hard. Do you see and hear, do any of you hear people challenging that behaviour?

Sidra: Sometimes, but I don't think as much because when people do challenge it, there's not a huge amount that does happen when people try and report it.

Eve: So you think it's hard. So back to what Jeremy is saying in terms of what are the repercussions then? So Sarah coming to you, cause I know you've been doing lots of work to think about how we can shift some of this culture.

Sarah: Yeah. So it's really sad listening to your experiences and I think we try as a school really hard to listen to our students' experiences. So we've got projects looking at what students' experiences are and how we can tackle that. And the same with sexism and as much as we can outside of the school, building safety on the streets.

Obviously we are teachers and we're trying to teach curriculum. So we do have an in-school group called Be Her Lead and we did a reclaim the night march to try and encourage the girls that I worked with to really feel like they could speak out. We did a brilliant session with the girls empowerment group that we run after school and talked about how, how our students feel on the streets walking at night and things that they do to keep themselves safe.

Obviously the bigger issue being the streets being safe, not how we protect ourselves. But I was quite shocked by the number of students who said, walking home, we did it in winter, doesn't feel safe for them and they will try and sometimes not come to an extracurricular club because it's gonna be dark by the time it finishes and they want to get home while it's still light.

Young girls who carry keys in their fists as a weapon because, it's just an element of making you feel a little bit safer. And so we had our community police officer in and she was also saying that you can get a free personal alarm, from the police as well. So heads up for that everyone, and things that she'd noticed about how you can keep yourself safe and the typical incidents that occur in our area and just to be aware of.

And then we created, after that discussion, our own posters. Yeah. We walked through Old Trafford down to Media City, along the water and stood outside the BBC with our posters just as a standard of activism and a way of having our voices heard and an opportunity for the girls to see that it isn't something that you have to take lying down.

And even if nothing comes from this and someone reading these posters, it was an act of defiance that we walked together as a group of girls in the dark and tried to get our voices heard. It's that activism. It's what can we do together as a school cause we are powerful and we have like, how many of us come to this school, eight hundred. And if we all wanted to make our area safe, Then we have the power to do that, but it's finding the ways to do that safely and also finding the time cause these guys are busy. Right. So we do run, an afterschool group and we've also run, a whole school survey, which you might remember doing. I think it'll have been when you guys were in year eight about sexual harassment and unwanted communication.

And do you feel safe in school and outside of school. And have you experienced unwanted communication from people and did you report it? And I think there's a really big, one of the things we identified was, luckily there weren't many experiences in school or out of school, but where there were, there was a real reluctance to report, and that's down to any number of things from feeling embarrassed or feeling shame linked to the incident.

Being worried about the repercussions for them and thinking that it wasn't gonna be safe for them to report that. And so I think there's a really big piece of work to do around how we encourage, and I think that's probably societal as well as within the microcosm of this school. So we've done a big piece of work around exactly what happens if you do report something has happened to you, and how we will listen to your experiences, listen to what you want the next steps to be.

Obviously we have a duty of care and safeguarding that we can't promise to keep anything a secret. But we will always tell the students what we're going to do with the information and talk them through that as much as we can. And we've tried to share that process and make it as transparent as possible so that students do feel more confident reporting in terms of how we then move on from that, it's now starting to think about how we tackle the attitudes that lead to that behaviour to begin with.

So now we've identified there are some instances inside or outside of school. How do we get to the root cause of what makes people think that they can speak to you like that on the street, in the school building, wherever it is. And that's much bigger than us and school rules or even punishments.

It's who has come up with the idea that they can speak to another person in that way, whether it's based on gender or race or religion or anything. How do we change that? And I think that's where we hope to make our next steps in dealing with sexism, sexual harassment, race. And that's massive. So yeah any hints or tips welcome.

Eve: Well, there's a good number of things that you talk to there. It's starting off by listening and actually hearing what people's different experiences are. It's really important. Yeah. A great selection of things that can be done. So you've taken some action, you've managed to get the Mayor of Greater Manchester over here. What would you like to say happen next?

Omaima: Change, like me being confident, walk down the streets alone, without anybody saying anything to me. Like in the park when I'm walking

down, like speak, say something or like scream or whistle or something. It's just not okay. So I want that to change. I want something to happen and people be educated.

Jeremy: Yeah, I think educating people is really important because if they know that they're doing something wrong, then they'll maybe stop doing it.

Sidra: It's like, Andrew Tate. So we were speaking about Andrew Tate and all the guys are like, 'oh my God, I look up to him' and this and this and that. But thing is, do you really look up to him though? Look at what he's teaching other people, especially guys as well. So saying that, go back to the kitchen, that's where you belong. Clean this and that. Stay at home. It's just stupid.

Sana: Yeah. I really think people need to be educated on what's right and wrong because people really normalise doing these things, but they shouldn't be normalised cause it's not right to say these things to people.

Eve: So when have you seen people shift and have that moment where they go, oh actually maybe that isn't okay and I can act differently.

Sana: To be honest, I haven't seen change. Like in my EE classroom, we're speaking about Andrew Tate and they find it funny. So they play his song. It's not okay. They find it funny. They laugh, they laugh about it with each other. The thing is, if like you have to think about your Mum, your sisters, and everything, like what, imagine what they're going through. Like you have sisters, you have, you have a Mum. It's just not okay. And they keep thinking it is okay.

Sarah: I think it's really important for us to be able to have this conversation in a space where everybody feels safe. So listening to Jeremy talking how we include everybody's voice without attributing blame because it's not all boys and. I think especially in this school setting, it's a real time of experimentation of what we think and how we feel. What you were saying before about you can be a bystander so you cannot get involved and that's good.

Great. But how were you actively supporting? So how were you being anti-sexist? But how do we make it feel safe for everybody to do that? Because I think the other thing is like in that situation that you experienced on the D of E, had somebody stepped in, are they putting their own safety at risk? So there's so many things to consider when you think about that, but I think for me, what I'll be trying to achieve next in this school is how we encourage other people to

stand up, how we make it safe for everyone to say, you are saying you like Andrew Tate, that's wrong and I don't wanna hear you say that.

And here's why. Without it becoming an argent, without it becoming, somebody feels like they can't say that because it's gonna lead to an argent. And that's a really big shift that I think we need to see.

Sidra: Things like safety depend on like how you've been brought up, like your childhood. Because I know with mine, my parents have tried to teach me my brother and my sister how to be respectful and we know the difference between right and wrong from like a young age and I feel like that plays a big part in everything as well.

Eve: So one of the reasons doing this project is cause we want people to be able to be. Active. I want people to live an active life, and our streets and our parks is a great asset for us to be active. Whether that's playing on the way to school, walking to school, running, exercising, kicking a ball about, anything, any way that you want to move and to get about doing a Duke of Edinburgh is a perfect example of encouraging people to get out and enjoy our outdoors because we know it's good for our mental health, our physical health or social connectivity for a whole load of reasons.

Do any of you, so are things that you enjoy in terms of being active outdoors, are there ways that, how do you get to, how do you get to school?

Omaima: I walk to school.

Eve: Go on to go and tell us what's your journey like?

Omaima: It is a 20 minute walk, so it's not like it's that long, but it's quite nice. This morning it was nice and sunny, so I was just listening to music, walking to school. So it's refreshing.

Eve: So what are the benefits? It's refreshing anything else about…

Omaima: It's just a bit nice before school to not be rushing around and be able to take your time walking to school.

Eve: And is there anything about that route, so when you think about your walk, it's a familiar walk. Is there anything about that walk that feels particularly safe in somewhere that you do feel comfortable walking on your own?

Omaima: I think just all of it, because I've lived around here my whole life, so I'm just used to everything. So all of it feels safe.

Eve: What about you? What's your experience?

Sidra: Well, I walk home with my sister, but we take the tram when we go. So sometimes I feel really paranoid going on the tram because of the people on there.

Sometimes it just doesn't feel safe to be on the tram. Yeah. Especially when it's dark outside. Like in winter it gets really dark quickly, so it just feels unsafe.

Sana: I feel like I'm more safer if there's loads more people around. So like if I'm walking home from school, the main road cause there's loads of people there. And when I don't feel safe, it's when there's no one there, but like one person, I'm not trying to be offensive to anybody when like a man, like a grown man.

Of course I'm only feel like scared anything. So like when I was doing my shopping for catering, I was walking and there's a some random guy behind us and of course our first thought is we're gonna, I'm gonna overthink it I was like to my sister Bushra run, run. So we just run home. But even though he wasn't following us, it's just them thoughts cause of course news and everything. So it's really scary.

Sarah: Would you have felt safer if he'd crossed over?

Sana: Yeah.

Sarah: Stuff like that. I think I've had that happen before where it's a man's crossed the street and I've instantly felt less threatened. And I think that's a really simple way that people can be actively supportive of making the streets feel safer.

And, then I always think the, the reverse side, I feel sorry for the men for whom genuinely aren't a threat because they're having to change their behaviour because of the societal attitudes that have pervaded us to make us not feel safe.

Eve: So there's little things that we can, we can all do.

Sarah: And especially things like hoods up, or like Covid. Yeah. With masks like anytime you couldn't clearly see someone, I think as well makes big

difference. Cause then you're thinking, are they hiding their identity for a reason?

Eve: So that point around more people and often as well, particularly more people in their diversity and more people that look like us as well, makes us often feel safer.

So a big part of that is just getting more people out. Like it sounds like if we're telling ourselves or people telling us, That it's not safe to go. Then those streets and places become empty, don't they? If we are there and we're occupying them naturally, people keep people safer. I'm just say conscious like as teenagers, what's your experience then of being out in parks and things?

Cause sometimes it's the opposite way around people go, if you're a group of teenagers, chatting and being sociable in a park can be perceived by others as a threat and as antisocial, which I think is actually a huge issue, a cultural issue we need to get past as well. Cause where are you meant to go and be outside?

Jeremy: I feel like there is a big stigma around teenagers. Like if I'm just going to the park with my friends, I feel like I will get a few looks and people like taking their children away cause it looks like we're up to something bad even though we're not.

Eve: So you feel like you've noticed other people respond to you and how does that make you then feel?

Jeremy: Just quite sad that they have to feel that way because other people are like that.

Sidra: Like I will go out with my friends sometimes and then cause me and my friends are quite loud when we're out, but it's not like it's like a happy loud, it's not like an intimidating loud, but we still get looks sometimes.

But I still try my best to smile at everyone so I don't feel intimidated. But sometimes it doesn't work because people judge too fast.

Eve: Have you got a favorite place that you like to go to? Is there somewhere that you like to go that does feel safe, does feel joyful?

Omaima: The Trafford Centre.

Eve: So what is it about the Trafford Centre?

Omaima: It's just the vibes. There's so many people and it feels like it's nice. It's a nice place to be. There's so many shops you can go shopping.

Eve: So there's pepople, there's vibes, there's food stuff to do. You mean?

Sarah: It's very well lit and I think there's lots of spaces where you can sit without having to buy anything. Like round the fountains or, but just benches in the corridors as well. I think that helps.

Jeremy: I like to go to like my mate's house just to say space where no one can really get us.

Sidra: I think again, going to my friend's house, but I also go to town quite a lot because obviously I go to Trafford Centre as well, but the town a lot bigger and there's a lot of different things you can do.

So say if you're on like Market Street and it's crowded, you can go somewhere else, the Northern quarter or something where it's less quiet. But it's also not unsafe.

Eve: So again, where there's lots of people and stuff to do and things to see, Sana?

Sana: For me, like coffee shops because they have a really nice atmosphere and everyone's just doing their own thing. So it's not threatening at all.

Eve: And are there places more on your doorstep here that you think, oh, that could feel a bit different, maybe things we could change that would make the place, a physical environment. Maybe feel a bit more like those other places that you like to go to?

Omaima: I think cause where I live in the night, it's a lot different like in the day, cause you've got families picking up children from school.

So it feels a lot safer. But then at nighttime, it changes quite a lot. Yeah. So it depends, when you go out.

Sana: There's been so many murders near where I live and it's really scary.

Sarah: I think the rejuvenation of Stretford Mall and I think the opening up of the canal specifically will be really transformational for our community.

I think that's something I'm really looking forward to, and especially the canal because it's often quite enclosed for running particularly I think having some open stretches and perhaps better lighting along there would make those spaces, more benches maybe as well, so that people can actually stop and have a seat.

Then you're more likely to come across people when you're traveling. But I think, I hope that opening up that space in Stretford Mall will make it feel like town or the traffic center in terms of that community vibe. That is a space where people can gather that's welcoming and safe.

Eve: So there's some great opportunities just around here, aren't there. Cause there's the redevelopment around Stretford Precinct and the redevelopment along the Canal also changes to the road right in front of the school here as well to make it feel much safer. Currently it's quite dominated by cars, isn't it? It's quite hard to cross the road. I'm not sure how safe you feel if you're walking or cycling.

So it's a real opportunity locally. So I hope all of you get involved in any of those consultations and can get your voice in there and, and really sees that as an opport unity to help shape your local place in a way that makes it that wonderful community vibe and somewhere that you want to be.

Thank you for sharing. Your stories and experiences and for being real, activists and change makers. And please hold onto that cause you can and you will make change happen.

Interview 2

Now. I'm joined online by three people who are working day in, day out to improve the lives and futures of young people in Trafford and across Greater Manchester. The Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit was established in October, 2019 as a team of subject leads and experts from lots of key sectors and agencies, including Greater Manchester Police, voluntary community and social enterprise organisations, the NHS and Youth Justice.

The unit's role is to address the underlying causes of violence and to work together with communities to pre vent it. Also joining the conversation today is Mark.

Mark Nesbitt: I'm Mark Nesbitt. I'm one of five directors of the Urban Fitness collective based in Trafford, Greater Manchester.

Eve: The Urban Fitness Collective, or Tuf-C, which it's sometimes known as, is a social enterprise based in Stretford, in North Trafford that uses sport to help young people make positive decisions in their life. I start by asking Catherine why safer streets matter to her and to her work.

Catherine Martland: My role is based across the whole of Trafford, so it's really important that particularly young people in my line of work have access to streets that they feel are safe, so that they can get out and engage in activities and access spaces in the local community that are beneficial for their wellbeing, their mental health, the physical health.

Eve: So Michael, why do safer streets matter to you in your work?

Michael Phipps: I suppose it matters to me as a human being, not just necessarily to my work as well, but I suppose my work is I do work for the Violence reduction unit, and it is all about making sure that whatever we do, we're listening to communities and co-designing what the solution should be with them and not, not imposing solutions or local people.

I suppose what's important is that we're getting the voices of the young people and the residents who live there, as to what types of things would help them to feel safer. So the community led approaches is about working with communities and making sure that we co-design services based on their need.

So it's about not doing to a community, it's about working with a community and making sure that services and interventions are designed with local residents.

Eve: And Mark.

Mark Nesbitt: I go back to my childhood and my youth. None of us were afraid of the streets. We were afraid of some people, but when I grew up, well, we was never in the house.

We was always on the street. We was always with friends and we didn't need to re-own them or own them. There's just places to be. I brought up in Gorton if people know Manchester Bellevue, Gorton, back to back, Coronation Street type houses back in the day. So it was just an enjoyable life and I just enjoyed my lifestyle and my childhood so much.

I've got three sisters, three younger sisters. Never played with them, but they was out and about. And if in some cases, if I went in early, And early being

seven or eight o'clock in the evening, that was early to go back in. When you're in your early teens, ten, eleven, twelve, when you go in early, my Mum used to kick me back out again cause it wasn't bedtime like go out for another hour.

I'm like, oh, my mates have gone in. Well, yeah, go do something yourself. And I would want it to get back to where young people that's from eight upwards, possibly seven upwards. Young people can just go and play out and more so that parents can allow that to happen. Cause sometimes it's the fearful parent who prevents young people from being on the street.

For me there's quite a big agenda here in regards to how do we reclaim streets for young people and, more so for us in my role is we want more young people to be more independent. And to get to us under their own steam. And, as a keen cyclist and a member of Trafford Cycle forum, I want to be, enable people to be able to walk and cycle about not being fearful of the environment. And that's the physical environment as well as cars and other things that could be hurtful to them.

Eve: So you've seen in your lifetime a change from your experience of growing up to what you now see young people's experience of growing up, and not that distant, that far distance between Gorton, Manchester and Trafford and I remember, yeah. My Mum kicking me out the door going, just go out and play. It's not a phrase that I've used very often with my three boys.

Mark Nesbitt: Yeah. I'm, I've got an eighteen and a nineteen year old now. No one, not one of their friends have knocked on my door here and I live in Stretford. I'll been living here for twenty years.

Michael Phipps: Because they'll text him now though, won't they? They'll text him. Sorry to jump in, but they'll text him and go outside. Like they won't do that thing of knocking on and saying, hiya Mr. Whatever, or hiya, Joe, Mark. They don't do that. Kids have lost some of that ability to speak to people.

Actually speak to speak to people as well, cause they'll text him so they won't just go and speak to you as their dad. They'll text him and they'll meet him at the end of the street. They won't go knock on for people anymore.

Eve: So there was a bit of research wasn't there that showed how much young people's worlds had shrunk.

So it showed a map of a few generations ago and how far young people, kids were able to potentially wander freely, independently, and how that has shrunk

over time to being a much smaller area and sphere around their house. Which when you think about progress feels like we've gone in completely the wrong direction in terms of enabling people to have that level of freedom and independence.

So Mark's given a couple of examples. You've talked about maybe a, a fear of being on the streets and also parents' role and maybe stopping people. I mean, what would you add, Michael, in terms of what do you hear? What is it that gets in the way currently of people experiencing our streets.

Michael Phipps: I think a lot of it's like you say that the way young people socialise is changed. I've got nephews, teenagers, and a lot of them will be in on the games or they'll go out when they're playing football. So when we used to go outside and just chill, do you know what I mean? Like you would just hang them out on the street or wherever you'd go and meet your mates outside a certain place and you'd just chill and speaking to somebody the other day, and she's talking about she wouldn't let her son or daughter out unless they were going to an organised activity.

So is that a fear of the young person? No, it's a fear of his Mum and she's saying, well, I don't think the parks are safe and nothing's happened in that park for her to make her think that. But she says, well, it's just quite dark. And I wouldn't want my son or her daughter going through that park because it cause it's dark.

But as a young person, we were always on the street or in the park where it was dark and that was, that was fine. That was what we wanted to be. It's like everybody should feel safe. But her fear there was the fear of the unknown. I suppose what some people experienced years ago would've been mugging, street robberies they've been about for years.

That isn't a new thing. Do you know what I mean? Is that something that some people will fear. Well, yeah. Everybody's got like expensive phones now, which didn't have when I was fifteen, I think I got my first phone at sixteen and it was a brick. But possibly, yeah, it's a lot of money that you don't want to lose.

That's your lifeline as a kid, isn't it? A lot of people are going around and, they've got designer coats, designer bikes, so I don't know where that fear comes from. Cause I can't put myself in the mind of a fourteen year old, I haven't experienced what they're experiencing. It'd be good to understand it from them.

Eve: That's really interesting. Because alot of people has spoken to that point of that doesn't come from an actual experience of. But has been socialised, it's been internalised that there's been this constant message that it's dark, this isn't safe, don't go there. That then as parents, we naturally adopt.

Michael Phipps: I think people's perceptions have changed though. If, if you would've seen that years ago, that's what people did that. Like they chilled, they socialised, they just hung about, that's what you did. Whereas if you would've seen that, now let's say if you seen fifteen, twenty teenagers, at the end of your road. You'd be like, what are they doing?

And you, you'd probably tell your son or daughter not to be like, you probably might be apprehensive about letting them do that. Whereas when we were younger, that's just what you did. When I was younger, I was buzzing when there was nothing to do like and you just hang about with your mates. You didn't necessarily have to be an organised activity on, you were just out. It's a hard one, isn't it?

Catherine Martland: I think I echo what Michael said in terms of young people tend to hang around a lot less now, but I guess there's phones, Xbox's PlayStations, thousands of TV channels to access it is, it's, it's a difficult balance to strikers isn't it cause we want kids to be out and we want them to be enjoying themselves and doing things. Go engage in activities. But does that need to be constantly that there's a youth worker there? Or should young people not just be able to go and go to the park and use the equipment and have a kick around with the mates and whatever else.

Eve: So what challenges do you see in terms of trying to create those safe and welcoming environments for young people in Trafford in your work Catherine?

Catherine Martland: Generally the young people that I'm working with are young people who have some, some challenges might be engaging in some crime or antisocial behaviour. And what we try and do is give those young people access to activities and entertainment where there is that support available. So it's about meeting young people in the places that they are.

So whether that's hanging around in a park or outside the shops or wherever you might typically find groups of young people and sending youth workers out, football coaches, things like that, to go and engage with them in them spaces and allow them to still be children in that way, and enjoy the community, but also do that in a safe manner.

Eve: And we know that not all young people are the same, right? They're as diverse as our population is as a whole, and they're all gonna have different, economic, cultural, social characteristics and things that distinguish them, and different interests and different fears and different joys.

What do you see and hear Mark in your work through Tough C in terms of the things that will enable us to create far more cohesive environments that are gonna be safe and joyful for all young people? Yeah.

Mark Nesbitt: Yeah I could reel off a list of things I suppose pre wifi is a huge drag now. Swimming, would you believe is a massive attraction? Sometimes I think it's just the freedom to do, the freedom to be, yeah. I was reflecting because just around a corner on the quadrant, there's a burger place just behind Old Trafford Cricket ground and early evenings, there's about half a dozen young lads mountain bikes on the floor, and they seem to be playing some dice or card game, and that's great to see.

I love that because they feel safe. They're doing some stuff, but I assume that, but others, they couldn't think in the same way as that. So they would be thinking, actually, what are those kids doing there? Why are they there? And so there's a negativity placed upon young people just because they're young people out and about doing stuff sometimes we try to create too much.

I mean, we've just been reflecting on, back in the day when there was nothing that we needed to create, apart from our own minds, really, our parents didn't create anything. We'd never seen a social worker care worker, a youth worker. We didn't see any, anybody on the street helping us to create stuff. The space was there.

We just created what was there. And so sometimes it's not necessarily about what we as adults should create, but I suppose it's about a feeling. We was asked to go to a park in Sale. This is Urban Fitness. I had a meeting with the friends of the local park group there and the local friends group were concerned about groups of young people gathering in the park.

And I'm like, yeah, okay, local kids gathering in their local park. And there was some anti-social behavior and that was the concern. They wanted to encourage more local, young people into the park but discourage any anti-social behaviour and give them things to do. And so there is a recognition that actually spaces are there spaces for everybody and how come create the environment and the energy to ensure that those pay spaces are respected and owned by everybody. Cause when you feel it's not owned by you, then that's when likely, you're down

a path of, well, it's not mine, who cares? And so a bit of damage here, although unwarranted, it's maybe not necessarily a bad thing for us to occupy ourselves.

Eve: Michael, are there any examples that you can point to across Greater Manchester of where people managed to create. Safe spaces that young people feel they do belong. And do you have that sense of ownership? And what do they look like? How do they come to being?

Michael Phipps: There's a community in Bolton that we're working with, and it's part of this community led approaches, which was started to community engagement in Gorse Hill, but everywhere in that job is at a different stage of the community engagement.

Eighteen months ago, we started doing community engagement on an estate where it had quite really high levels of antisocial behaviour. And when I started speaking and engaging with the community, they said, look, he said, five years got our community and shut down or the community didn't shut down, but a college took it over so the community felt pushed out.

And that used to have a local dad that had done the boxing in there for thirty years and Mum's had done mothers and baby groups. There was food banks, there was community events out of there. But when that shut down, the anti social behaviour went through the roof cause there was no activity. It had a youth worker a couple of nights of the week, boxing, et cetera.

And when that went, there was nothing else. And because of where the estate was located and because of poverty, the young people were not getting the bus to go boxing, which was two areas away, or into the town centre or to go to the youth centre if it wasn't on their estate. They weren't interested. Oh, not weren't interested, but they couldn't access it.

Yeah, so we, we worked with the young people and the residents on that estate and tried to co-design a plan of what they wanted. The guy that did the boxing on there said, look, he said, I'm getting old now. I wanna pass that batton on. And we identified four Mum's and four Dad's and we've put them through their boxing coaching level one, and then they've now reestablished his boxing club, which shut down five years ago.

And the antisocial behaviours dropped. I can't tell you by what percentage, but your people have got somewhere to go who feel safer. They've got parents or local role models off their estate providing that activity. It isn't a service that's

flown in. So that is a good example because we consulted with the young people.

What activistic would you want rather than us design it. What would you want and where would you want it? Who would you want to deliver it? And they named the local organisations of who they'd want to be involved. So we would approach them and say, what could you do with a bit of funding? And we co-designed that plan for that community.

But one thing I would say, there's a lot less parks and open spaces that there was when we were younger. There's a lot less of that. I think cost has a massive impact on things. So if activities are on now, there's quite a big cost to it. A lot of people cannot afford. I think community cohesion is a big one as well.

And what I see, what I mean by that is I always love being out when you are younger and whether you were doing something that you shouldn't or not, you are always wary because you knew everybody in that area and everybody knew you are, they knew your Mum and dad where he is. Just thinking back to what Mark said before and his kids' friends would not even knock on the door and ask for his son or daughter anymore cause they'll text him and meet at the end of the street or, but do the young people know, know the adults in the community and do they know each other's parents and families as well as what they did when we were younger.

If you do, you sort of feel safer. Cause as a kid walking around,, do what I mean? You feel everybody around there and oh, that's such body's dad and he might do the football and you feel more part of the community. But if everybody just shuts the door and nobody comes out and there's none of those opportunities to engage as a community, it can feel a little bit daunting. Do you know what I mean? So I suppose community cohesion, are people integrated into communities as well, or are they just placed there?

Mark Nesbitt: Yeah, I think you've got a really good point now because first months of pandemic we was all on the streets.

What we clapping or speaking to our neighbours and give us a chance and give us a sense of in my view, gives us a sense of getting to know who your neighbours are rather than just passing 'em in the car or passing them as you walk past in some cases, two or three neighbours down.

I didn't even know. I knew who they were, but I didn't even know their names and stuff. And it seems like we've gone back into our houses again and all of a sudden the WhatsApp groups aren't as lively anymore and we're not doing stuff.

Michael Phipps: When you were younger, nobody as a kid read the papers.

So you, you wasn't really aware of any of the negative stuff that was on in the papers, cause papers most, it's a lot of negative stuff in is going on. You wasn't aware of that. You might check a certain football score or whatever, but you wasn't looking and reading the news as a child. Whereas because it's on your phone, whether that's an incident happening in your local area, everybody's got access to that.

And I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but it could fuel the fear. As a kid, I wouldn't have known if it was load to crime unless it happened directly to you or your friends or somebody at school where it's getting verbally spoken about. Whereas now it's just ping straight to everybody's phone when it's an incident.

Eve: Yeah, it's definitely a lot more attention is given and drawn to, isn't it? A lot of those negative examples, but they don't get bombarded in the same way by all the positive messages of all the people that are out on the streets, that are out in spaces, are out in parks every day having joyful experiences.

So that sense of community we've all talked about is being really important. How do we then create that sense of community for young people and what role. Talk about young people's voice, but what role can young people play in creating that?

Michael Phipps: Well in the Greater Manchester Violence Reducation Unit, We've got a campaign at the moment called I Am Greater. Now the message behind it is it's a youth-led campaign and the idea behind it is it's young people saying, as a young person in Greater Manchester, I am greater than violence.

Because they said they wanted it to be more aspirational cause they wanted to do some youth-led campaign around violence structure. But they said they didn't want it to be your old school messages, like drop the knife, you'll lose your life, et cetera. They wanted it to be more aspirational rather than just knife crime, knife crime, knife crime. So there's a youth load campaign and you can look at ImAGreater.co.uk and have a look at examples and these young people on there who have personal, been affected by serious violence, whether that's themselves or their brothers or close friends, family, whoever, and they're going on giving hope, talking about their aspirations for the future.

And it's just, young people are talking about things in a positive way, right. And, reclaiming that space. Do you know what I mean. Rather than it just accepting what thry've said is negative, they're flipping it on it's head. Well, why can't we focus on the positives? We have got hopes, I've got aspirations. And it's brilliant to focus on that.

Eve: So really reframing it into a positive and what we'd like to see. So what are the other things, Catherine in terms of your work in Trafford?

Catherine Martland: I think a big one is those safe spaces, being able to go to the parks and feel like they're safe. And that can be a whole range of things from the people who are accessing those parks with them if they're concerned that crime is going on, but also the lighting being good than being able to get there. One of my colleagues described the day that he got his first bike the other day as being the day that he got his freedom. And I thought that was massive. It's not something that I'd ever really thought about, but as a child, especially if you don't have much access to money, and, it was 20p to get on the bus when I was little, it's a hell of a lot more than that now.

So if you don't have access to that, but you've got access to a bike, That really opens up so much of the local community to you. But if young people don't feel like they're confident to ride on the streets or get to particular places, then that's a massive barrier. It really reduces that independence for them, especially the safe spaces is something that comes up time and time again.

Particularly young people in the area around Old Trafford when there's people coming to watch the football and that whole area becomes gridlocked with cars. There are hundreds of thousands of people walking past the houses and they don't feel like then they've got the spaces that they can go and use.

So I think all of that is big, but the main thing for me is having that consultation with young people and how we do that. Cause I suppose that's the aspiration. The aspiration is to hear from young people and get their views and, work with them to make spaces that they feel they've been involved in creating.

It's working out how do we speak to young people because, if you post a survey on Facebook, they're not gonna see it most likely if you post a letter through the door, that's gonna be picked up by the adults in the house. So it's about how we get out and speak to young people in ways that suits them.

Mark Nesbitt: I suppose we need to change the narrative when we want to engage young people to create a safe space or to do, or to create an activity and

stuff. It's always our narrative going, saying, well, we want you to come to us, we want you to do this, so we'll go to you and what do you think about this? And so it's always coming from an adult perspective.

It's about how do we turn that round? How do we get young people interested in safe spaces? And I mentioned that because we was asked by Trafford Council, can we go out and engage young people in the redevelopment of Stretford Leisure Centre because all the consultation mechanisms didn't hit any young people and they wanted young people to be involved.

But all of the current mechanisms that the council have got fail miserably to engage young people, they need to be able to trust, whether it's us as Urban Fitness, whether it's their football coach,whoever it is, they need to be able to hear that message from someone that they trust and not someone who's just rolled up as a council employee or as an employee of the Leisurer Centre to say, what do you think about this?

If they use a trusted organisation or person, which is why Trafford Leisure and the council have come to Tuf-C because we can go out and have that, have that conversation in a trusted environment and a valued environment. And I think that's the key. My final point is that we talk about green spaces and parks and stuff, muggers, and they tend to be away from mainstream.

Whereas what I want is to create spaces in plain sight of everybody else. We talked about natural surveillance, people coming and going. So entrances, talk about takeaways, entrances to Stretford Mall entrance to the council offices. Where people will always be and always want. That's where young people get shifted from.

Don't hang about outside the Stretford Mall. Don't hang about out there. Move on out the way in a green field. Sit down and, do what you need. So adults tend to shoo and persuade young people to move into what they were made to perceive to be less safe spaces. And then they're surprised when they don't go or they tend to turn back up on their doorstep again two days later saying, there's no wifi over there, mate. Can I stay here?

Eve: So you've talked between a number of examples of ways in which spaces. Can be made to feel safe. So a sense of community between both young people and the adults that they're around. You've talked about the role that both parents and youth workers and others can play to help them facilitate spaces and activity and create safety in that sense by being present and offering opportunities to get involved in something.

You touched about some of the physical environment piece, so a bit about lighting and some of the things that can make space feel safer. Not having been bombarded by cars and, and not being bombarded by negative social media messages that tells you this is a place that is dangerous because, an incident happened to somebody else who may or may not be a bit like you.

So there's a whole list there of some things. Is there anything you'd want to say as a final reflection? Anything you've heard in particular that from perspective of girls and young women that we need to do?

Catherine Martland: I went to an event last week that was concentrating on how community support can help reduce violence. And one of the points that they made were, was about how many fewer girls access activities. So any sporting activities, but the percentage of girls accessing things is way less than boys. And I suppose that really stuck out for me as something that we need to work on in terms of what is it that girls want to be doing.

Have we gone out and asked that question? And is the barrier that they don't feel safe getting to the activity? Is it that they don't feel welcome when they're there? Are there not the right activities for them to complete that they're interested in? And I guess explore that in terms of allowing girls to access more things that might not need to be a girls' only activity, but just something where they feel like that is a space for them to go and use.

Mark Nesbitt: GM Moving give us a couple of grand, I think some money to do some roller skating. And predominantly that was young girls. So we used to have about sixty, seventy young people come, this is in Urmston, sixty or seventy people come on a Friday evening and 90% of that was young girls.

And that was purely word of mouth. Young girls saying, come have a good time. And, sometimes it's the activity that draws young girls who feel safer in nbers of more girls, sometimes, Mums of young daughters would want their daughters to be with girls rather than maybe with boys and girls for various different reasons.

So sometimes it's maybe we would want to look at girl only, women only spaces, our women only swimming that we introduced in Stretford Leisure many years ago. Still continuing and, now there's a women only swimming Muslim women group activity going on there as well. And so sometimes it's about addressing specific need and targeting that specific need.

Michael Phipps: Just consult with them. I can't tell you what it's like to be a young female and what I think should happen, I think we've gotta ask them, don't do a service, thinking this is how they'd want it. Ask them to it at the start of it rather than, than wait till we've set it up as adults and then nobody attends it. Have them involved from the start.

Mark Nesbitt: And I think there's we work as Urban Fitness on a peer to peer approach really. So as adults we work behind the scenes and it's young people working with other young people, first of all to us as a role model, and secondly, to encourage their positive behaviour.

And as from that positive behaviour is trying to reduce the perception of fear in certain spaces. I can't go there because, well, you can. And if you can't go there and you think you can't go there, why can't you? So let's reduce that barrier. And so sometimes messages come better from peers rather than from perceived adults and parents.

Eve: So young people are often excluded from processes of designing streets and spaces and don't therefore get to shape spaces in the way that works for them and have a sense of ownership of them. There's increasing opportunities now to involve people in thinking about urban design and the built environment.

And, it is potentially an an exciting area in which young people can develop skills to reimagine and rethink what our places look and feel like.

Michael Phipps: I suppose when I talked to about the Bolton example before, when I spoke to some of the young people there, they were saying, well, do you know why wouldn't we be on the social, look at our estate, look at this and look at that.

And they were all, they were telling you about the negative things that they see every day. And what happened now was this wasn't anything that necessarily needed a lot of funding, but there was a local community, green space action group that was set up and young people loved to get involved in. It was a local housing association there that knew this, this man who loved garden and doing up the disused areas to give them load of tools.

He set up a community WhatsApp group and they've gone round as a community doing up the different areas and just instilling a bit more of that community pride.

Eve: Yeah, exactly. And that can come out in all sorts of ways, can't it? It might be that it's actually grafiting. You're doing great public art in a space that creates sense of, and then I guess there are some of the more permanent changes to our streetscape that young people could be more directly involved in not just the influencing through their voice, but actually in doing and creating.

Mark Nesbitt: What I've found in my experience is that the people who are leading streetscape, public realm, redevelopment, architects, role planners, engineers, they are so far removed from young people who occupy those streets or may wish to occupy in a positive way. Those streets, they're building a different world for me.

And so when we ask, well, what about young people? Who's engaging them? How can we engage them in a different way? And where's the more importantly, where's the resource to make that happen. Oh, well, hmm, can you get them to fill in this questionnaire? Well, it's not good enough. And so we as adults need to change the way that we look at how we engage on people into how we co-design, redesign and stuff that Michael's was doing over in Bolton.

Co-design and co-production has been around for years. It's just that there's been, there's hardly any money for it and it, that process takes a lot of time and effort and resources and if small places, it really does work. Like what Michael was saying.

Catherine Martland: I'll just give another perspective to that. Cause I actually was involved in a bit of a consultation a few days ago about some plan development to one of the other Leuisure Centres in Trafford.

And before any consultation has even taken place, what the team who've been managing that have done is they've gone to all of the local community groups. So churches, schools, youth centers, so right from toddler groups all the way through to the groups for older people who are going out and doing exercise and things and sat down with them and said, what are the questions that we need to be asking?

What do we need to consider? How do we get people to come and understand that this is something that is gonna be really beneficial for them? And it was about. Not just engaging the people who already use those facilities, but people who don't. And why might they not use those facilities?

And it was really simple stuff. It was, you've got to think about the fact that this is school drop-off time, so no one's gonna come at that point because they'll all

be on school drop-offs. So these events that you've penciled in aren't gonna work. Can you put some food on? Because if you want them done in the evening and people have gotta get their kids fed, then, if there's a bit of food for them to, to access while they're there, then great.

Is there anything else that we can use to bring people in? So I think those conversations are happening. I'm sure there's probably some work still to be done and it's hard to reach everybody in the communities. But I think that's it, isn't it? It's using those partners like yourselves, Mark, like all of the other groups and different people that we have across Trafford to pull that conversation in and, and get to everybody.

Outro

Eve: Thanks for listening to this episode of the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving Podcast.

We've heard a lot of this episode about the importance of shifting cultural norms, which severely limits young people's freedom to get about and enjoy the streets and places where they live. And we've heard about the need to work with and listen to young people to ensure we better design places which reflect their needs and ideas.

As this podcast is just the start of the conversation, we'd love to hear from you. What have you seen help make the difference more child-friendly and young people-friendly streets and places. How do you ensure that young people's voices are heard? Perhaps ask a young person you know what makes streets feel safe and welcoming to them?

Or, if you are a young person, let us know your experiences and what good looks like to you and your friends. Whatever it is, let us know and we'll share your thoughts on future episodes of this podcast. We've got a few ways you can get in touch. Tell us on social media. We're on Twitter and LinkedIn.

Simply search GM Moving or Greater Sport, or you can leave us a voicemail. It's really simple and free, and you can record on your computer or on your phone. You can find the link in this episode show notes, and on our GM moving website. Just search Right to the Streets Podcast.

A big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this episode.

We'll be releasing more episodes throughout the next few months, so keep an eye on our social media pages for when the next one will be released or simply hit follow or subscribe on whatever podcast player you're listening to right now. This means the latest episode will go straight into your library as soon as it's released.

This Right to the Street series, the GM Moving podcast is one element of the right to the streets project. Led by GreaterSport, Trafford Council, Open Data Manchester and other GM Moving partners. Thanks to funding from the Home Office for Safer Streets.

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