



# Safe Music

Making gigs and festivals safer for women



A report by the White Ribbon Campaign UK

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You can download this report online from:  
<http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk/node/273>

# Introduction

Violence against women and girls happens throughout our society, and the music industry is no exception. The problem affects thousands of people who attend gigs and festivals – and it seems to be on the increase. A growing number of women are reporting assaults and rape at UK music festivals.

Music venues and festivals are all about offering people a great time. Booking the best acts, providing great sound with a breathtaking light show, and creating a welcoming and comfortable environment, are vital to your success. But so is making sure all your customers are safe...and *feel* safe.

The trouble is, your customers' experience is too often very different from how you planned it - and this is especially the case for your female customers. Groping, verbal abuse, assaults and other forms of harassment at gigs

and festivals are more common than any of us would like to think.

More and more people in the music industry are taking a stand about women's safety. Paul McCartney, Harry Styles and many other performers have worn White Ribbon badges to express their commitment to the cause. And festivals and music venues are increasingly realising that they need to do more.

This report will give you some real, practical tips to help festivals and venues stop violence against women and girls. It will show you how you can help your female customers to know they can attend your events with confidence. And it will help you encourage your male customers to take a stand.

Because everyone, male and female, should be able to enjoy music events free from fear.



## **Did you know....**

**25%** of women interviewed by researchers recently said they had felt unsafe at a festival

Over **50%** felt festival organisers could do more to improve their safety

**90%** of festival-goers were unaware of what measures, if any, organisers had taken to protect women from assault.

Many festivals and venues are now working harder than ever to keep their customers safer, but there's a lot more work to do...

# Your 10-point checklist

1. Acknowledge that women and girls do experience violence and harassment at music events, and that this is a serious problem.

2. Explain to staff, volunteers and customers that it is EVERYONE'S responsibility to stop it.

3. Encourage your customers (male and female) to report anything of concern to security staff, police, bar staff or other officials.

4. Publicise our Top Tips for customers (see page 11).

5. Standing by while you witness harassment or violence makes you part of the problem. Support all men (staff, volunteers and customers) to step up in ways that are safe for women and girls. Help them be part of the solution by choosing to be engaged, active bystanders.

6. Book a training session to make sure your stewards, security, other staff and volunteers never blame the

victim, and always know how to support anyone who is experiencing violence, threats or harassment.

7. Support your performers (especially male ones) to raise awareness and take a stand against male violence against women and girls; they can have great influence.

8. Ensure all your customers know that you won't tolerate abuse and violence, and find the local information you need to be able to signpost them to suitable advice and support. Reassure them that you care, and will never hide or shy away from these issues.

9. Encourage male customers to keep an eye on their friends, so that nobody they are with causes trouble or harasses women.

10. Create a robust action plan to stamp out violence at your events. Make sure all staff and volunteers know about the problem, and know how to take it seriously.

# What's the plan?

Don't leave anything to chance. Develop and implement a solid action plan to involve men in ending violence against women and girls. For example:

- Involve your local community by organising at least one awareness- and fund-raising event every year.
- Reassure your female customers that you are doing your utmost to keep your events safe, and that you take a strong, zero-tolerance approach to all forms of violence, abuse and harassment. Tell them exactly what to do and who to talk to if they feel unsafe.
- Make sure that your male customers take responsibility for their friends' actions, and that if they witness any unacceptable behaviour, they either intervene safely, or at the very least know how to alert your staff. Most men do not abuse women, but almost everyone knows someone who might. Research shows two-thirds of assaults on women are witnessed<sup>2</sup>.
- Display information about the issues prominently in your pre-publicity materials, and at the festival or gig itself. Include our Top Tips for customers (see page 11) on your website, in your programme and on posters, to highlight your commitment to providing a safe environment for all your customers.
- The Campaign has many resources that cover different aspects of how to involve men and how to keep women and girls safe: posters, car stickers, badges, wristbands, general information leaflets, and much more. You can buy these from our website – this will help keep the White Ribbon Campaign going as well as supporting your event! User-friendly planning templates are also available for free on the site.
- Local authorities and local charities also provide leaflets and information on all these issues, which you can use to raise awareness. Local authorities generally have domestic violence or safer communities units, which will have specific local information about safety issues and about local counselling, domestic violence and other services. Your local Police and Crime Commissioner's Office will also be able to help.

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<sup>2</sup> Hart and Miethe, Journal of Quantitative Criminology 2008

# Top tips for staff and volunteers



Well-trained, knowledgeable stewards, security and other staff, and volunteers will:

- Never think things like “she’s asking for it” or “it’s just a bit of fun”. If it is “harmless fun” then she can tell you that, not him ... and even if she does say that, you can still tell her how to get help if anything happens later.
- Look for non-verbal signs that she’s uncomfortable in the situation.
- Listen to her, even if she is drunk or stoned.
- If you think someone might get violent, identify the people they are with and talk to them, to help assess and defuse the situation.
- Make a note of descriptions of people, and what has happened, in case things get worse later.

- Accept that it is better to be called in to a situation that turns out to be harmless, than not be called to a serious assault.
- Identify 'potential' situations and intervene.
- Be aware that 'mosh pits' or other crowded areas can hide groping from all but the victim.
- Be on the lookout for women who appear to be alone or surrounded by men; or 'responding' to something unseen; or who look like they may need to be directed to welfare/first aid.

### ***Training your staff and volunteers***

*It is essential to make sure your people know how to create a safe environment at your events, and exactly what to do if things start to get out of hand.*

*White Ribbon training can provide your security staff, stewards and other staff and volunteers with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to identify and defuse risky situations in a sensitive, safe and effective way.*

*To find out more, contact The White Ribbon Campaign at 1 New Road, Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire HX7 5DX tel 01422 886545. Or email: [info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](mailto:info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk).*



# Get your performers to help

*“Festivals are a celebration of music and people, a place to let go and feel safe doing so.”(Mumford and Sons, 2016)*

The performers that you book care about the safety of their fans, so they should be very happy to associate themselves with the Safe Music campaign and the actions you're taking.

Some of them will be well aware of the issues and already taking action. Mumford and Sons recently said they would never play the Swedish Bravalla Festival again, for example, unless police and organisers took steps to improve women's safety. This followed reports that five women were raped and 12 others sexually assaulted there.

And check this out from Frank Turner's blog, where he talks about guys who harass women at gigs: “People like that are not welcome at my shows. If it happens to anyone again, please try and alert me, or one of my band or crew, or the bouncers.....There is no possible excuse, including alcohol.”<sup>3</sup>

Some performers may not have thought much about violence against

women at music events. Others may be part of the problem – performers telling rape jokes at gigs makes women and girls less safe, for instance.

Here are some ideas for ways to get performers involved:

- Get performers to show their support by talking about it before the gig on their website and in posts on Twitter, Facebook and other social media pages
- Ask performers to express their support for the Campaign, and for women's safety at music events, during the gig itself
- Encourage them to sign the White Ribbon pledge and promote the goals of the White Ribbon Campaign
- Ask them to send a message of support and a photo to the White Ribbon Music Project Facebook page
- Put out a press release about your commitment to safe music, with quotes from key performers. White Ribbon can help you put this together

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<sup>3</sup> <http://frank-turner.com/2016/05/15/safe-gigs-for-women/>.

- Get them to share the White Ribbon Music Project Facebook page with their fans and followers: <https://www.facebook.com/White-Ribbon-Music-Project-1648965555340222/>
- Ensure that all performers have clear guidelines about on and off

stage behaviour that is unacceptable, and that they know you have a zero-tolerance policy about abusive language and behaviour (edgy humour is great, rape jokes are not). Do not re-book performers who flout your guidelines, and be clear about this upfront when you make bookings.



# Top tips for your customers

1. Play safe: remember that everyone is there to have a good time, but some people may try to take advantage of, or create, a risky situation.
2. Be aware of what is going on around you. Is that woman or girl capable of getting herself to safety? Does she need help getting there? Are the people around her likely to step up, ignore her, or be an added danger? Find the nearest steward/security officer, who can help her to safety.
3. Do what you can to ensure your own safety, that of your friends, and of others.
4. Encourage the people you came to the event with, to enjoy themselves but to act responsibly towards others – don't be a passive bystander to violent or abusive behaviour, and don't let your friends be either. Keep an eye on what's happening around you...don't let your friends be part of the problem, because that makes you a part of the problem too!
5. There are many different ways to step in when you witness a violent or potentially violent situation. These can range from direct challenge through to distraction, delay tactics or delegation – in other words, getting someone else to intervene (that's why festivals/venues employ security and stewards!).
6. Don't take unnecessary risks - seek help from staff or security, from your (or her) friends - or from the people around you.
7. If you make a new friend, take a photo on your phone and send it to your mates – so they have a picture even if you lose your phone. If he objects to a photo, ask yourself why – and find a different friend!
8. Don't be afraid to speak up and report any incident you see or are involved in.

*Display these tips...  
on your website...in your event programme...and on posters*

# Working with the authorities

Eliminating violence and harassment, and responding effectively when they occur, is a top priority for all police and local authorities.

When seeking permission and licences for your events, you'll need to demonstrate that you've considered the issue of gender-based violence, and that you've got a clear, documented action plan for making your event safe for everyone. White Ribbon training can show you how to do this.

Festival organisers have to gain permission from the local authority,

who may seek advice from emergency services, police and others. Police forces with festivals in their areas support the Safe Music campaign, so your support as organisers can be helpful.

Many people are suspicious of those 'in authority' these days. But don't be too dismissive - they can in fact provide many benefits, including advice and other resources, staff and funding.

Local authorities have their own priorities and there will be points at which yours overlap with theirs; one of these is community safety.

## ***Finding the money to do it right***

*Local authorities may have funds available for training and other elements of your event. For example, community funds from local authorities can support young people into work experience as volunteers at your event.*

*Many local authorities have already signed up to the White Ribbon Campaign, creating action plans of their own to work towards ensuring the safety of staff and residents of their areas. See the list here: <http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk/node/302>. Local authorities license clubs, venues and festivals and have a responsibility to ensure the safety of residents and visitors to their area.*

*Many police forces also support the White Ribbon Campaign – and this includes police forces who have to authorise licensing of festivals and venues. Police and Crime Commissioners offer community safety grants. And in most parts of the country there are Community Foundations which advise on grant funding and can, in some cases, distribute grants. Find out more at <http://ukcommunityfoundations.org>.*

*So it's worth doing some research, to see what's out there. And remember that the White Ribbon Campaign's qualified trainers can also help you access funding, as well as training your staff and volunteers.*

Local authorities generally have domestic violence or community safety units, and police also have community safety requirements. As well as advice they often have funds! Most areas also have a Voluntary

Action Council, or Council for Voluntary Services, which may be able to provide training and even volunteers. So don't assume you can't afford extra training, leaflets or staff and volunteers!

### **Setting up an Event Safety Group**

*If you're organising an event, you need to be able to show that you can manage its safety aspects. Clear roles for staff, volunteers and sub-contractors at all levels, and making 'collective responsibility' a core part of your event management, are essential. Encourage shared training where possible, to ensure that everyone is aware of the issue of gender-based violence, and shares the responsibility for making sure your event goes off safely.*

*Nationally, police forces have shown increasing interest in new thinking about bystanders. They are aware that people ignoring a risky situation makes it more likely that people will get hurt, and understand that collective action is an effective tool in prevention strategies.*

*All local authorities who licence events will have their own policies and strategies on gender-based violence. They can insist on similar policies at events in their area. The actions in this guide can show what you are doing to fulfil their requirements.*

*Include bystander intervention training for stewards and security staff, and volunteers, in your event planning.*



# What's in it for you?

Some festivals and venues may think associating themselves with White Ribbon is 'bad publicity'. Of course, harassment and abuse are not feel good factors. But it's actually good publicity for you to say "we're doing what we can to keep women safe".

As well as benefitting your customers, signing up to the White Ribbon Campaign can bring all sorts of advantages to your business:

- Partnering with White Ribbon Campaign sends a clear message that you are a safer environment for women – you take the issue seriously, without being 'staid'.
- Lower levels of violence/abuse towards women is great in itself, and also improves your reputation with customers.
- Materials, training and advice from the White Ribbon office will help you produce and implement an effective action plan.
- Working with the Campaign will help you show you are 'doing your bit' at licensing and event safety meetings.
- You will have access to the Campaign's extensive networks and contacts, including staff in local authorities who licence venues and events, and police forces.
- Protection against litigation. Recent tribunal cases in which employers have failed to challenge discriminatory behaviour have resulted in compensation/costs orders at unprecedented levels.
- People want to do the right thing – taking a stand will lead to happier, more motivated staff and volunteers, and create a feel-good factor throughout your festival, gig or other event.
- A growing number of festivals recognise these benefits and are working in partnership with us. Festivals working with us this year include Boomtown (Winchester), Cloudspotting (Lancashire), Fleetwood Folk and Blues; Ambition (Croydon); Musicport (Whitby); Mugstock (Glasgow); and Beverley Folk Festival.
- So a partnership with the internationally recognised White Ribbon Campaign will be good for your reputation, and for the safety of women at your event or venue. It will show your potential customers – male and female - that you are part of the solution.

## Why not host a White Ribbon stall or space at your event?

A great way of involving men, and reassuring your female customers, is to host a White Ribbon Campaign stall or space at your gig or festival.

A White Ribbon space creates opportunities for men (with or without women present) to explore their own attitudes and behaviour in a safe, supportive environment – to look at how they can be part of the solution.

We have many years' experience at hosting discussions with men about how they can support respectful, non-violent relationships with women. We want all men to feel comfortable and proud to take a stand.

A White Ribbon stall can provide advice to your male and female customers, to help them to spot problems and to tell them what to do if they see or experience anything that they're uncomfortable with.



# Useful links

The White Ribbon Campaign UK

1 New Road, Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire HX7 5DX

Tel 01422 886545

Email: [info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](mailto:info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk)

Website: <http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk>

Twitter: @menantiviolence

Facebook: White-Ribbon-Music-Project and White-Ribbon-Campaign-UK

## Other organisations

Women's Aid: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Respect: <http://respect.uk.net/>

Safe Gigs 4 Women: <http://www.sgfw.org.uk/> @safegigs4women

Girls Against: <http://girlsagainst.tumblr.com/social> @girlsagainst

## Useful online articles

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11822420/Bestival-UK-music-festivals-have-a-rape-problem-that-needs-action-now.html>

<http://www.nme.com/news/slaves/89994>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/tracey-wise/safe-gigs-for-women\\_b\\_8053330.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/tracey-wise/safe-gigs-for-women_b_8053330.html)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/34921372/these-young-women-are-fighting-against-groping-at-gigs>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/36713031/more-than-40-sex-assaults-reported-at-two-swedish-festivals>

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Bestival by White Ribbon Campaign; page 17 Terry Hall by White Ribbon

Campaign; page 18 Nancy Kerr and Martin Carthy by White Ribbon

Campaign; page 19 Whyte Horses by White Ribbon Campaign.



# About our campaign

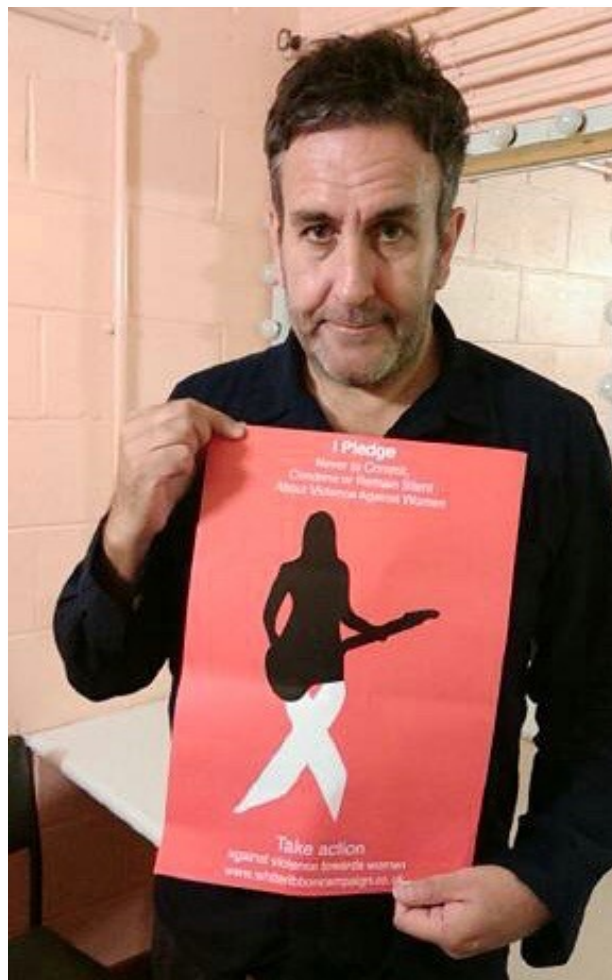
The White Ribbon Campaign started in Canada in 1991 and has spread across the world, involving men and boys in campaigns to end male violence against women and girls. The UK White Ribbon Campaign was created in 2005, and is now the largest White Ribbon organisation in Europe.

We work in partnership with many organisations, and individual men, from across our society to end violence and promote healthy, respectful relationships. We provide advice, support and training to schools, local authorities, music and sports venues and many others.

And our staff and volunteers meet regularly with Government ministers, MPs, Police and Crime Commissioners and community leaders, and are influential in policy development.

The White Ribbon Campaign's pledge, already signed by over 25,000 men across the UK, is a promise to: *Never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.*

For our Safe Music campaign, we have identified the best ways to keep women and girls safe at gigs and festivals, and to enlist men to be part of the solution - rather than part of the problem.



## The Safe Music campaign

The aim of Safe Music is to:

- raise awareness among promoters, venue managers and festival organisers, of gender-based violence and harassment at music events
- support you to take effective steps to minimise violence against women and girls at your events
- help you train your staff and volunteers to reduce male violence against women and girls

- advise you on how to enlist the active support of male music lovers and musicians to help keep women and girls safe
- encourage the whole music community to support the aims of the White Ribbon Campaign.

Many big acts are already on board. You can find an impressive list at [www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk), including Martin Simpson, The Proclaimers, Terry Hall, Nancy Kerr, Martin Carthy and more.

Festivals which have supported us this year include Boomtown (Winchester), Cloudspotting (Lancashire), Fleetwood Folk and

Blues; Ambition (Croydon); Musicport (Whitby); Mugstock (Glasgow); Beverley Folk Festival – the list goes on!

Venues which actively support the Campaign include The Hebden Bridge Trades Club; Ort Café (Birmingham) and The Grand (Clitheroe) amongst others.

Radio show hosts like Mark Radcliffe and Tom Robinson are also getting involved.

You want to know why? Watch Lady Gaga's video 'Til It Happens To You': <https://youtu.be/ZmWBrN7QV6Y>. Then get involved yourself...and if you need any help, get in touch!



# And finally...

## Stronger Together - Men challenging violence against women and girls

There is a growing recognition that preventing violence against women and girls is an urgent priority. It is equally obvious that this cannot be achieved without changes in attitudes and behaviour by men.

Men commit the vast majority of violence against women and girls. Also, although most men are not violent or abusive – they are likely to know someone who is.

Men can be active bystanders, influential in encouraging and challenging other men to be respectful and non-violent. They should stand alongside women to help create a society where violence is completely unacceptable.



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