

# Keeping safe in parks

Our parks provide a place for residents to spend their leisure time, to relax and meet others. They also offer great opportunities for exercise, to improve your health and wellbeing and to spend time in nature.

Everyone has the right to feel safe when using a park and the chances of you or a member of your family being attacked in a park are extremely low. The Parks and Open Spaces in the London Borough of Richmond are some of the safest in London and we work hard to keep you safe while using the parks.

We have set out what we do to keep you safe, how you can keep yourself and others safe and how to keep wildlife safe when using our parks.

## Keeping you safe

### Assessing safety in parks

Parks staff assess all our parks and open spaces to ensure that they are safe and if there are ways that we could improve safety for park users without affecting their enjoyment or feeling of being in a natural space. We work to address areas where people feel unsafe, even if the risks are low. Please contact us if there is something that you think we should know about.

### Partnership working

We work closely with the Metropolitan Police (MPS) and MPS Parks Police, the Community Safety Team and the Parks Patrol service to share information about crime and anti-social behaviour statistics and the local community's reported fear of crime in parks. Once we have identified problem areas, we will tackle the issues together through a range of measures.

### Public Safety Protection Orders

All parks and open spaces are controlled by Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) including measures and restrictions which aim to keep you safe by eliminating anti-social behaviour in our parks. These can be found on the council website: [https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/pspos\\_and\\_byelaws#pspo](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/pspos_and_byelaws#pspo)

Richmond Park, Bushy Park and Home Park are covered by The Royal Parks & Other Open Spaces Regulations 1997. These can be found on The Royal Parks website: <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/park-management/regulations-legislation>

### Good maintenance of parks and sightlines within a park

Good visibility in a park helps to make it safe. On main routes through parks, we aim to have clear sightlines so that visitors can see other people at a distance and move away from a hostile situation safely if they need to.

All our parks receive regular maintenance, and we continually assess the need for pruning back shrubs and bushes to allow sight lines while maintaining the natural amenity value of the park for people and wildlife.

### Lighting

Where lighting currently exists in green spaces it is maintained and upgraded as required. Where there is lighting of paths in parks pole lighting is preferred as it provides the best uniformity of light.

Currently, it is not council policy to install lighting in other parks and open spaces. This follows advice that additional lights may encourage users into those areas after dark, which is contrary to the Metropolitan Police advice to “Keep to well-used roads. Don't use alleyways or short cuts”.

Where we know that park paths are used as a short cut, we will maintain clear visibility of the route through the park so that park users can assess the route for their personal safety.

Lighting is often in conflict with environmental policies and can have a detrimental effect on habitats and ecosystems for wildlife.

## **CCTV**

Permanent and mobile CCTV cameras can be used in a park to target a known problem or where crime and anti-social behaviour is taking place.

Permanent cameras are very expensive and not cost effective in relation to the low levels of reported crime, each park would be assessed to verify if this measure is proportionate. If CCTV is considered on a permanent basis, it may be attached to an existing building or outside the park to cover entrances and exits. There would in turn likely be a need for additional lighting and power to support it.

## **Locking parks**

At present the Council does not lock most parks during the hours of darkness. Some parks are locked, and these have been selected for site-specific reasons and can be found [here](#).

## **Encouraging activities**

We all feel safer in busy spaces where there are other people, so the Council continues to promote events and activities in parks and open spaces to encourage more people to benefit from everything that parks have to offer. We regularly consult park users about their parks and open spaces and work closely with community groups. Feedback from these consultations is used to improve our parks. Parks are regularly patrolled by the Parks Patrol service and police and together we respond to all reported incidents in our parks and open spaces.

# Keeping yourself safe

## **Plan your visit to stay safe**

If you are worried about your safety while visiting a park there are some things that you can do:

- Make sure that you take your mobile phone with you. Most modern phones have a shortcut to making emergency services calls such as repeatedly pressing power button 5 times. *Check how to do this on your own phone.*
- Tell someone where you are going.
- Use the main paths in the park or only visit areas where you know that there will be other people, such as around facilities or equipment.
- Make sure you know where the exits are so that you can leave if you need to. There are maps for all parks and open spaces on the council website.  
[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/find\\_a\\_park](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/find_a_park)
- Consider carrying a personal alarm, loud whistle or using a personal safety app on your phone.
- Do not walk on ponds or lakes that are frozen.
- Swimming in any ponds or lakes, may disrupt the natural habitat of wildlife and can pose a risk of injury to you from objects concealed beneath the water's surface.

## Valuables

Where possible leave valuables at home. Keep anything of value out of sight and secure in closed pockets where possible.

- Register any valuables on [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com). This may improve your chances of getting them back if lost or stolen.
- Register any bicycles on [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com) This is a bicycle marking & registration scheme.

## Be vigilant and remain calm

- Be aware of your surroundings and other people in the park.
- Don't wear headphones or talk on your mobile if you are worried about your safety.
- Walk confidently, looking ahead.
- Get to know other park users. There are often people who visit regularly, and you may come to recognise them.

## Walk away from hostile situations

If you are unlucky enough to find yourself in a hostile situation, walk away to somewhere you feel safe. Get help from the police or ask someone else in the park to call the police, by calling 999 if there is a danger to life or call 101 in other circumstances.

## Supervise children

- Make preparations for children becoming lost in a park by agreeing a place to meet should you become separated.
- Make sure children know not to speak to strangers in the park without your permission.
- Ensure children know who to approach if they need help, identifying uniforms such as police/PCSO's and park staff.
- Make sure children are supervised in areas where there are ponds and rivers. Do not allow children to play on frozen ponds, rivers, or lakes.

# Keeping safe around water

The River Thames is a hot spot for activity, particularly during the summer months but it is important to remember that the Thames is a dangerous river – it has a strong current, and houseboats and debris can all cause serious risk to life. The RNLI has five simple steps that could save your life if you get into difficulties in the water:

- If you're struggling in the water, fight the urge to thrash around.
- Lean back extending your arms and legs.
- Gently move your limbs to help you float if necessary.
- Float until you can control your breathing.
- Call 999, call out for help or swim to safety.

For more information on water safety in Richmond visit our Water Safety Page

[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community\\_safety/water\\_safety](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community_safety/water_safety)

## Keeping safe at night in parks

### Don't put yourself at risk

Always stay in well-lit areas where there are plenty of people. People are less likely to commit crime if other people are around to see what is happening. The Metropolitan Police advice is to keep to well used roads, don't use alleys or short-cuts and to walk on the side of the road with best visibility and lighting.

### Plan a route

Always plan a route and make sure you stick to places you know. Never take short cuts, including through unlit parks.

### Walk or exercise together

Always stay within a group of people or near other people when possible. By remaining close to people that you trust and know, you'll reduce the risk of being targeted by other people who could take advantage of you.

## Keeping others safe in parks

### Look out for safety of others

- If you see something, check to see that other park users do not need assistance.
- Be respectful of others using the park and share the space.
- Report any concerns to the police or parks team.

### Dogs

- It is your responsibility to make sure your dog is always under control in public. Some adults and children are frightened by dogs. They don't know how your dog behaves.
- Dog poo – It is your responsibility to bag it and bin it in any public waste bin or take it home.
- See the Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders for other restrictions.  
[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/xwfdvy45/pspo\\_dog\\_control\\_order.pdf](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/xwfdvy45/pspo_dog_control_order.pdf)

If you would like to report a dog related incident or issue, please email [parks@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:parks@richmond.gov.uk) or ring 0208 891 1411.

## Keeping wildlife safe in parks

### Care for nature

We all have a responsibility to protect our parks and open spaces for the wildlife that lives there.

- Care for nature and do not cause damage or disturbance. Park users are not permitted to injure or disturb animals, cut, damage or remove any plant, shrub or tree without the consent of the Council.
- Use litter bins or take your rubbish home and recycle where possible.
- Do not light barbecues or fires in the parks and open spaces.
- Dispose of cigarette ends and other smoking material in a responsible manner.
- Do not leave items that can magnify the sun's rays and ignite dry grass.

## Reporting a crime in a park

Call 999 if it's an emergency (if a crime is taking place, you suspect someone of a crime, violence is being used or threatened, or where there is a danger to life), or 101 if it's a non-emergency.

You can also report a crime online via the Metropolitan Police Report a Crime site.

<https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

The Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service all use What3Words to locate incidents in large open spaces quickly. Consider providing emergency services with the What3Word location when reporting crimes and emergencies.

<https://what3words.com/pools.alive.wasp>

## Reporting a fault or antisocial behaviour in a park

If you would like to get in touch with us about something non-urgent you can contact the parks team via means below:

- To report a fault please use the council website [https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/report\\_a\\_parks\\_fault](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/report_a_parks_fault)
- To report an incident that is not criminal please email [parks@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:parks@richmond.gov.uk) or ring 0208 891 1411.
- If you would like to report a dog related incident or issue, please email [parks@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:parks@richmond.gov.uk) or ring 0208 891 1411.

## More information and useful links

- Crime stoppers <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe>
- Richmond Neighbourhood Watch [London Borough of Richmond | Neighbourhood Watch Network \(ourwatch.org.uk\)](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/communities/ourwatch)
- Richmond Community Safety Partnership [https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community\\_safety/community\\_safety\\_partnership/richmond\\_community\\_safety\\_partnership](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community_safety/community_safety_partnership/richmond_community_safety_partnership)
- Fearless (Crimestoppers for young people). <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/what-is-fearless>
- The Metropolitan Police <https://www.met.police.uk/>
- The Royal Parks <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/>
- Water Safety Advise [Water safety - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community\\_safety/water\\_safety](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/community_safety/water_safety)
- Met Police crime prevention information – [www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention](https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention)
- Register valuables on [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)
- Register bicycles on [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com)