



The Association of Consumer Support
Organisations (ACSO)

Driving change for vulnerable road users

March 2022

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Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation, more than 1.35 million people are killed and as many as 50 million are injured every year in road traffic collisions globally, with vulnerable road users (VRUs) disproportionately affected.¹

“ Some take [this overall reduction in deaths] as ‘job done’ [but] this is still an unacceptable toll for using the roads. ”

While UK road safety has significantly improved in recent decades, falling from more than 6,000 road deaths in 1979 to fewer than 2,000 deaths in 2019, there is still a long way to go to ensure VRUs are not disproportionately at risk.² As Barry Sheerman MP, Chair of The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) notes, “some take [this overall reduction in

deaths] as ‘job done’ [but] this is still an unacceptable toll for using the roads.”³

With the number of VRUs rising as a result of pandemic-induced transport shifts, prompt action is necessary to ensure greater safety. As we move towards more historically ‘normal’ modes and volumes of traffic, there is a chance there could be more dangers for VRUs who have become accustomed to the quieter and safer roads brought about by lockdowns.

With someone killed or seriously injured every 22 minutes on UK roads, government and local authorities must have clear action plans to reduce accidents and ensure there are safe and segregated spaces for all modes of transport.⁴ Technology should be adopted and utilised where necessary to make the roads safer for all. Finally, the most dangerous road users must be taken off the roads and all others should be kept up to date with changes in guidance and the law.

In the UK, every 22 minutes someone is killed or seriously injured on our roads.

Throughout this report, ACSO will make recommendations which could have a significant and positive impact on the safety of road users in the UK.

¹ World Health Organisation, [‘Road traffic injuries’](#), June 2021.

² PACTS, [‘What Kills Most On The Roads?’](#), December 2020, p.5.

³ *Ibid*, p.5

⁴ Brake, [‘UK Road Death and Casualty Statistics’](#).

‘Vulnerability’ and the Highway Code

On the road, ‘vulnerable’ refers to those who could be more easily injured or even killed in the motor-dominated environment, namely those who choose to travel by foot, bicycle, motorcycle, mobility vehicle, scooter or horse.

Almost all of us will have been at some point, or may be on a regular basis, a vulnerable road user. It should, therefore, be in all of our interests to advocate for a safer road environment.

One recent attempt at combatting dangers has been an update to the Highway Code. Perhaps the most significant and most welcomed change by many support groups has been the new hierarchy of road users, which places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top. Other changes include:

- Pedestrians having the right of way when crossing at a junction and traffic having to give way;
- Cyclists being allowed to ride in the centre of the lane at junctions, on quiet roads and in slow-moving traffic;
- Updated safe-passing distances for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders;
- Where people driving or passengers in a vehicle are able to do so, they should open the door using their hand on the opposite side to the door they are opening, a technique known as the ‘Dutch Reach’;
- People driving and/or riding a motorcycle should not attempt to overtake people cycling within that person’s lane and should allow those cycling to move across their path as they travel around a roundabout;
- When turning into or out of a side road, people cycling should give way to pedestrians who are crossing or waiting to cross.⁵

“It’s vitally important that all road users - especially drivers - take the time to fully understand what’s new as some of the changes are a significant departure from what’s gone before.”

The head of roads policy at the RAC, Nicholas Lyes, says: “These major changes to the Highway Code should make the roads safer for the most vulnerable road users, in particular, those walking and cycling, so are to be welcomed.” He continues, “it’s vitally important that all road users – especially drivers – take the

time to fully understand what’s new as some of the changes are a significant departure from what’s gone before.”⁶ However, as will be seen throughout this report, without education and enforcement of this new guidance, changes could be futile, or could even make matters worse for VRUs.

⁵ Department for Transport, [‘The Highway Code: 8 changes you need to know from 29 January 2022’](#), January 2022.

⁶ Dods, [‘RAC comment as new Highway Code changes set to go live tomorrow’](#), January 2022.

Cyclists

Anyone riding a road bike, mountain bike or e-bike is considered vulnerable on UK roads. Due to poor or non-existent cycle paths, cyclists are often forced to share the road with motor vehicles. This can force cyclists into unnerving and often very dangerous situations where drivers frequently pass too quickly or too closely.

Between 2004 and 2020, pedal-cyclist fatalities increased by 5 per cent, serious injuries rose by 26 per cent and overall pedal-cycle traffic grew by 96 per cent.⁷ In 2020 alone, cycling traffic increased by 46 per cent and cyclist fatalities rose by 41 per cent.⁸ However, rises in the number of cyclists on the roads does not have to equate to more of them being injured or killed.

Between 2004 and 2020, pedal cyclist fatalities increased by 5 per cent, serious injuries rose by 26 per cent and overall pedal cycle traffic grew by 96 per cent.

To Nick Chamberlin, Head of Policy at British Cycling, the route to safety for cyclists lies within education and enforcement. Indeed, whilst Chamberlin describes the Highway Code's new hierarchy as "one of the most important steps towards the safety of cyclists in decades", he believes far more needs to be done to educate the general public of these changes. As they came into force at the end of January 2022, knowledge of the changes was sparse and inconsistent, having the potential to cause chaos. As Roger Geffen, Policy Director at Cycling UK, says: "Education helps build a societal consensus of why the law is necessary, while the enforcement ensures that this consensus isn't undermined."⁹ **In light of this, ASCO therefore recommends a comprehensive, long-term public-awareness campaign which outlines recent changes to the Highway Code. To avoid further conflict and confusion on the roads, its messaging must be understandable, accessible and visible.**

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To Chamberlin, another critical requirement for the safety of cyclists is improved enforcement. Years of government underfunding has meant that road policing has suffered substantial blows. Traffic police numbers have fallen by almost half since 2007, a significantly higher drop than the 17 per cent seen in other police workstreams.¹⁰ Yet the number of people killed or seriously injured on

the roads is much higher than the number of those killed or hurt by public disorder. A report commissioned by Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary in 2015 looking into the effectiveness of roads policing advised forces that 'increased levels of road policing can reduce traffic violations and road casualties' largely because fear of detection and

⁷ Department for Transport, '[Reported road casualties in Great Britain: pedal cycle factsheet 2020](#)', September 2021

⁸ Cycling UK, '[Why do we need more traffic police?](#)', August 2018.

⁹ Cycling UK, '[The government's 'Road Policing Review' is asking the wrong questions](#)', October 2020.

¹⁰ Cycling UK, '[Why do we need more traffic police?](#)', August 2018.

prosecution deters people from behaving irresponsibly and unlawfully.¹¹ **With this in mind, ACSO therefore recommends more funding for road policing in order to ease the burden on other public services that encounter victims of road traffic accidents.**

Within the 1988 Road Traffic Act, there exists an ‘exceptional hardship’ loophole which allows motorists to maintain the right to drive even with 12 or more points obtained during a 3-year period on their license. Should they be able to prove they would face ‘exceptional hardship’ such as being unable to work or being unable to care for a dependent family member if they were banned, they will be able to dodge an outright ban. According to Cycling UK, this is exploited by more than 8,000 motorists each year.¹² Parliamentary road safety campaigner Lord Berkeley found

According to Cycling UK, over 8,000 motorists each year have successful ‘exceptional hardship’ pleas.

that from 2011 to 2020, there had been 83,581 cases of motorists escaping a ban after pleading mitigating circumstances. This equates to around one in five of those who obtain more than 12 points each year being allowed by the courts to continue to drive.¹³ Often this can be with tragic and even fatal consequences. In its 2021 report, Cycling UK highlight the example of Christopher Gard, who had not only 12 points but also 8 convictions as a result of using a mobile phone while driving. After a successful exceptional-hardship plea, six weeks later he was texting behind the wheel when he ploughed into the back of a cyclist who was thrown onto the windscreen and killed.¹⁴ Tragedies such as these are wholly avoidable and courts must ‘prioritise protecting the public, not protecting someone’s licence to drive’.¹⁵ At a recent Crime, Police, Sentencing and Courts Bill debate in the House of Lords, Lord Berkeley echoed this sentiment, noting that “the problem is that this excuse is being used far from exceptionally” and recalls that during his time in court as a magistrate, he would expect a plea from some solicitors as a matter of routine for all their clients.¹⁶ In light of this, he urges the government to “tighten up the definition” of this exceptional hardship within the bill.¹⁷ **With amendments to the Crime, Police, Sentencing and Courts Bill anticipated, ACSO would like the government to reconsider the ‘exceptional hardship’ loophole to ensure the basic safety of all road users is not jeopardised by dangerous drivers.**

The increased number of cyclists on the roads combined with the £338 million government package aimed to boost cycling across the country means swift action must be taken to ensure cyclists are adequately protected on the road.

¹¹ Cycling UK, [‘Why do we need more traffic police?’](#), August 2018.

¹² Cycling UK, [‘Exceptional Hardship loophole lets one in five drivers escape ban’](#), December 2021.

¹³ Road CC, [‘Parliament urged to close exceptional hardship loophole that lets motorists who go on to kill keep licences’](#), December 2021.

¹⁴ Cycling UK, [‘Exceptional Hardship? Case studies illustrating why the law on exceptional hardship pleas needs to change to stop drivers avoiding automatic bans for unexceptional reasons’](#), July 2021.

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ UK Parliament, [‘Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill Volume 815: debated on Monday 8 November 2021’](#), November 2021.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

Pedestrians

Walking provides a wide range of health and environmental benefits. It also carries a certain degree of risk as pedestrians are considered to be some of the most vulnerable, and often overlooked, road users. Indeed, more pedestrians are killed in collisions with cars and vans than any other road user, yet they themselves typically pose very little risk to other road users.¹⁸ In 2019, there were 3 people in motorised vehicles killed in collisions with pedestrians and cyclists compared to 517 pedestrians and cyclists who were killed by motorised vehicles.¹⁹

In 2019, 3 people in motorised vehicles were killed in collisions with pedestrians and cyclists, compared to 517 pedestrians and cyclists who were killed by motorised vehicles.

It is therefore a welcome development to see pedestrians at the top of the Highway Code's new road user hierarchy, making them a number-one priority when it comes to road safety. Other welcome changes benefitting pedestrians including a new obligation for drivers to give way to pedestrians waiting to cross at junctions, an encouragement of adherence to the 20mph limits, and new guidance for greater space when overtaking.²⁰ **Just as has been highlighted elsewhere in this report, it is crucial that these changes are communicated, understood and acted upon for there to be any real meaningful change.**

It may also be time for attempts at increased safety which are not solely focussed on education and traffic regulation. The answer to safer roads could lie within technology. Though it may never be possible to design a car that cannot injure pedestrians, more can be done to change the manufacturing of cars to ensure injuries are less severe. For example, vehicles could be modernised to protect pedestrians better by increasing the crush depth between the shell of the vehicle and the hard objects underneath so that any impact absorbs as much energy as possible without causing injury.

Pedestrian protection should also be at the forefront of thinking when looking at the continued innovation of automated vehicles (AVs), which are capable of driving themselves. Responses to the Law Commission's 2020 consultation on AVs saw plenty of concerns about the technology's impact on VRUs.²¹ For example, the International Telecommunication Union Focus Group on AI for Autonomous and Assisted Driving stated that "there are currently no regulations, no standards, no testing procedures or even industry best practice for assisted or automated driving system detection of low-impact collisions, vulnerable road user collision, runover events or near-miss events".²² Other responses also expressed concerns regarding insufficient scenario testing for how AVs respond to wheelchairs, their lack of ability to

¹⁸ PACTS, '[What Kills Most On The Roads?](#)', December 2020, p.5.

¹⁹ PACTS, '[What Kills Most On The Roads?](#)', December 2020, p.5.

²⁰ Living Streets, '[Highway Code: Make Walking No1!](#)'.

²¹ Law Commission, '[Automated Vehicles Consultation Paper 3: Analysis of responses](#)', January 2022.

²² *Ibid*, p.71.

recognise a number of different pedestrians, and their excessive attention to motorways instead of streets.²³ **In order for road safety to progress and modernise, the introduction of any technology must keep VRUs at the forefront.**

The pavement should provide a segregated space where pedestrians feel safe. Pavement parking, however, can cause difficulties, particularly to those who are elderly or disabled. It can force vulnerable people onto oncoming traffic. It should also be noted that pavements are not designed to endure the weight of vehicles, meaning there is the possibility of an added cost of repairing damaged and cracked pavements. At present, there is little nationwide consistency in pavement-parking enforcement, meaning there is both little understanding and little action on the issue.²⁴ **ACSO recommends that there are consistent nationwide regulations to ensure the pavements are a designated pedestrian safe space without any obstruction.**

²³ Law Commission, *'Automated Vehicles Consultation Paper 3: Analysis of responses'*, January 2022.

²⁴ Living Streets, *'Pavement Parking'*.

Horse riders

84 per cent of horse riding incidents are a result of drivers driving too closely to the horse

According to the British Horse Society (BHS), there are 3.5 million regular riders in the UK. Though there are geographical variations, it is usual to come across a horse rider on the road at some point.²⁵ Similar to cyclists, horse riders are forced to share the road with larger, louder and stronger vehicles. One of the biggest risks to their safety comes when drivers overtaking do not leave a safe distance between themselves and the rider, in turn causing the horse panic and distress. According to the BHS, this is the cause of 84 per cent of incidents involving horse riders.²⁶

Alan Hiscox, BHS Director of Safety, expressed relief at some of the changes in the Highway Code which are set to help protect horses and their riders. The new guidance states that:

- Horses should be passed at a maximum of 10mph and at two metres' distance;
- Horses will be placed alongside cyclists in the hierarchy;
- Drivers are advised not to cut across horse riders when turning into or out of a junction, or changing direction or lane;
- Drivers are also advised to take extra care and give more space when passing horse riders in bad weather or at night.

Despite this, Hiscox also expresses concern regarding the changes' translation to other road users. Inconsistent communication and widespread misinformation have the potential to cause serious danger on the roads, particularly for those who are vulnerable.

43 per cent of horse rider road accidents occur because of vehicles passing too quickly.

While the AA, the BHS and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) all issue their own advice on how to pass riders and share the roads with them safely, it is crucial that local authorities and government also educate road users of this. The BHS argue that if drivers were aware of what to do when passing horses and riders, safety on the roads would be vastly increased. The Department for Transport (DfT) therefore needs to be realistic about the impact of changing a seldom-read document. **ACSO believes the DfT must promptly introduce a comprehensive education campaign aimed at drastically improving the behaviour and, subsequently, the safety of all road users.** According to analysis carried out by the *Accident Analysis and Prevention Journal*, the average effect of road-safety campaigns worldwide is a 9 per cent reduction in accidents, with campaigns accompanying new legislation proving even more beneficial.²⁷ Following this hypothesis, if a campaign was to be introduced alongside the recent changes to the Highway Code, more than 10,000 people could be spared the ordeal of a road traffic accident every year in the UK.²⁸

²⁵ The AA, [‘Safely sharing the road with horses’](#), February 2017.

²⁶ Cycle Accident Claims Management, [‘Cyclists classified as a vulnerable road user in the UK’](#).

²⁷ National Library of Medicine, [‘Accident Analysis and Prevention: meta-analysis of the effect of road safety campaigns on accidents’](#), February 2011.

²⁸ Department for Transport, [‘Reported road casualties Great Britain, annual report: 2020’](#), September 2021.

Motorcyclists

Motorcyclists account for less than 1 per cent of UK traffic but account for 18 per cent of fatalities.

Due to their riding motorised vehicles, motorcyclists are often forgotten about as VRUs. Yet while they account for less than 1 per cent of UK traffic, they make up almost 20 per cent of road fatalities.²⁹ Even though motorcycles are quick and easily manoeuvrable, they are at the highest risk from other drivers. This is largely due to the fact they can easily fit into blind spots, and they can be difficult for drivers to hear. Risks are greater in poor weather; rain, snow and fog all make it more difficult for the motorbike rider to see or stop/turn suddenly if required.³⁰ In addition to motorcyclists being placed in the

most danger, when they are involved in an accident, they are also more likely to suffer a serious or fatal injury.

Colin Brown at the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) believes motorcyclists may not benefit as much from the Highway Code changes. Brown is concerned that the introduction of the hierarchy juxtaposes the idea of personal responsibility too much. He adds that the dangers associated with road travel are not due to lack of laws or regulations, but are instead due to a lack of compassion, understanding and respect for other road users. The MAG's 'Welcoming Roads' campaign emphasises that 'all road users have a duty to show consideration and compromise with their fellow citizens to maintain an environment that is welcoming to all'.³¹ Brown further asserts that far too often "psychology is confused for skillset" as it is not always the mode or choice of transport that is to blame for accidents, but the attitude of the operator.

Despite doubts over the value of the updated Highway Code for motorcyclists, Brown also worries about its lack of communication with the general public and the potential for misinformation as a result. This view is echoed elsewhere, with Cycling UK already highlighting on its Twitter account some of the 'fake news' that has been circulating. These included misleading and incorrect headlines from both *The Times* and *The Evening Standard* which stated, respectively, 'Cyclists pedal to middle of the road under new Highway Code' and 'New Highway Code rule will fine drivers £1,000 for opening door with wrong hand'. The Highway Code, however, does not advise cyclists to ride in the centre of the road, it advises cyclists to ride in the centre of their lane at junctions. Nor does it state that drivers will be fined £1,000 for opening door with wrong hand but instead states that opening the car door in a way which causes injury or damage to property can lead to a maximum £1,000 fine.³² **With such misleading content, it is increasingly evident that substantial and widespread education is necessary, not least from government but also from the press and media.**

²⁹ Hudgell Solicitors, '[Motorcyclist accident statistics show bikers 50 time more likely to suffer a fatal injury than car drivers](#)', July 2021.

³⁰ Cycle Accident Claims Management, '[Cyclists classified as a vulnerable road user in the UK](#)'.

³¹ Motorcycle Action Group, '[Welcoming Roads](#)', June 2021.

³² Unsure how to reference a tweet?

E-scooters

According to the DfT, e-scooters should be added to the VRU category since ‘they are not protected by a vehicle body in the same way car users are, and tend to be harder for drivers to see on the road...[meaning] they are particularly susceptible to injuries.’³³ Despite this, personal e-scooter sales have rocketed in recent months, with one retailer reporting a 450 per cent increase in sales.³⁴ Reasons for this have been largely attributed to people’s aversion to public transport during the pandemic. This trend has, however, continued with *The Times* reporting over one million private e-scooters on the roads at the beginning of 2022.³⁵ With such a huge number operating vehicles outside of the law, there is an undoubtable sense of urgency to act.

In 2020, there was a 450 per cent increase in the sales of private e-scooters

The small sample of data collected so far helps to provide some information regarding the number of personal injury road traffic accidents involving e-scooters in the year ending June 2021. It showed that there were 931 accidents involving e-scooters. Of these, there were 3 fatalities, 253 serious injuries and 675 minor injuries.³⁶ According to Edd Carlton, Consultant in Emergency Medicine at North Bristol NHS Trust, ‘over 40% of patients who are treated after e-scooter incidents have fractures, a number also suffer life changing head injuries’.³⁷

While it is absolutely necessary to obtain more data before forming too many conclusions, it remains clear that there is a need to educate both e-scooter riders and other road users on how to travel harmoniously on the roads. However, the poor state of many roads combined with high levels of traffic mean there is currently not the infrastructure in place to support e-scooters, which could push riders onto the pavement or main roads. Indeed, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and the Bicycle Association agree that the current cycling infrastructure is not up to the job of hosting e-scooters, meaning extra space for walking, cycling and scooting is required for the safety of all.³⁸

Already in 2022 there has been work undertaken to establish whether or not all e-scooters could be given the same distinctive artificial sound to warn people, especially the visually impaired, of their proximity. Acoustic researchers are working with UK e-scooter rental schemes with the aim of developing a universal sound for the near-silent vehicles.³⁹ This

³³ Department for Transport, [‘Reported road casualties Great Britain: e-scooter factsheet 2020’](#), September 2021.

³⁴ Stewarts Law, [‘The rise in popularity of e-scooters – what is the legal position in the UK?’](#), November 2020.

³⁵ The Times, [‘One million e-scooters on the roads: how riders are breaking the law at breakneck speed’](#), February 2022.

³⁶ Department for Transport, [‘Reported road casualties Great Britain: e-scooter factsheet year ending June 2021’](#), November 2021.

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³⁸ Living Streets, [‘Walking and E-scooters’](#).

³⁹ The Guardian, [‘E-scooter firms to develop universal warning sound after collisions’](#), January 2022.

technological development could be crucially important for their safe integration onto the roads.

As electric, semi-autonomous vehicles, e-scooters are the perfect example of modern transportation, and they are here to stay. However, they are operating in an already imperfect and complicated environment where there are more questions than answers regarding their future. Where would e-scooters be placed on the road user hierarchy? Will the DfT create a new class of vehicle for e-scooters? How will private and rental e-scooter regulations differ? What kinds of regulations will they follow? **With this in mind, a cross-industry approach to the safe integration of e-scooters on the roads is crucial. This should include co-operation between manufacturers, retailers, owners of rental schemes, government and tech companies. Only through productive collaboration can e-scooters be safely introduced to our roads.**

Victim support

Despite active work on increasing road safety and minimising accidents, it is inevitable that some will end up injured or even worse. It is crucial that those who find themselves in such difficulties have adequate access to compassionate victim support, rehabilitation and compensation where appropriate.

This is something that Sarah Hope has found not to be the case. In 2007, a bus collided with Sarah, her mother and her two-year old daughter. The driver, who was later convicted, fatally injured Sarah's mother Elizabeth and caused life-changing injuries to herself and her daughter Pollyanna. Instead of being treated with the care, compassion and professionalism they deserved, Sarah and her family suffered immensely. Like many others who have found themselves caught up in road crash incidents, they were neither acknowledged as nor considered victims of crime.⁴⁰

At present, The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) does not include culpable road deaths in its definition of homicide. If it did, families bereaved by law breaking drivers would qualify for more support, including:

- A caseworker to help them navigate the justice system;
- The right to appeal the charging decision;
- Inclusion in the government's criminal justice strategies and programmes;
- The right to more information on the investigation and prosecution process.

Some progress that has been made in the new Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales. An addition has been made which states that 'where the Victims Contact Scheme is offered, the National Probation Service will also offer victims access to the scheme where the offender is sentenced to 12 months or more in prison for causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving or causing serious injury by dangerous driving.'⁴¹ This will provide a welcome degree of support to victims of road crime.

For Sarah Hope and many other victims, success could also come by extending the role of the Victims' Commissioner to include road crash victims. The Victims' Commissioner is a branch of the government and seeks to promote the interests of victims and to encourage better treatment of victims in the UK. It raises awareness of the common issues faced by victims, monitors the effectiveness of victim support and constitutes a voice to influence policy. By extending its role to include road crash victims, others like Hope would be given more of a voice. However, when approaching and directly communicating with government to extend the role of the Victims' Commissioner to include road crash victims, Hope was told that 'any extension of the role to new areas of responsibility would need to have a clear rationale for doing so and what the commissioner's function would be'. It also added that since 'the commissioner is now well established and understood, extending it carries the significant risk

⁴⁰ Transport for London, '[Sarah Hope's Story](#)'.

⁴¹ Ministry of Justice, '[The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information materials.](#)', April 2021.

of diluting the efficacy of the role and that confidence would be lost.’ It remains unclear, however, how extending the role of the commissioner to road crash victims would in any way undermine the work done for other victims. Despite hundreds of victims of dangerous driving every year, there are many who are not currently receiving any support.⁴² **ACSO therefore recommends the extension of the Victims’ Commissioner to include road crash victims to ensure they are given the help they deserve.**

⁴² Statista, [‘Dangerous driving offences England and Wales 2008-2021’](#), January 2022.

Conclusion

Changes made to the Highway Code in January 2022, such as the establishment of a new hierarchy of road users, is a step in the right direction. As Paul Laughlin of Stephenson Law notes, “better protection for more vulnerable road users has been long overdue and this is certainly a positive step forward”.⁴³

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However, to reap the benefits these changes intend to create, it is crucial that they are well understood. Without widespread awareness of the revised Highway Code amongst all road users, casualty numbers may not come down as hoped.⁴⁴ As Rebecca Ashton, Head of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart, has said, “without a well-funded education programme the changes could increase conflict and potentially reduce the safety of the VRUs the rule changes are intended to protect”.⁴⁵

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There are many ways in which road users can be better protected, regardless of their place on the hierarchy. This should include a revision

of the exceptional hardship plea to ensure the most dangerous drivers are kept off the road, along with a VRU-orientated focus on technological innovation and road maintenance. For those who are injured, they must have access to adequate support through the Victims Commissioner to acknowledge their hardship and to provide care. With such changes, there is an increased likelihood that road users across the UK will become safer .

⁴³ Fleet World, [‘Highway Code changes to create new ‘hierarchy of road users’](#), August 2021, p.1.

⁴⁴ Association of Consumer Support Organisations, [‘ACSO responds to the Department for Transport consultation on the proposed changes to the Highway Code’](#), October 2020.

⁴⁵ Fleet World, [‘Highway Code changes to create new ‘hierarchy of road users’](#), August 2021, p.1.

Summary of recommendations

A comprehensive public awareness campaign outlining recent changes to the Highway Code

The introduction of technology which places vulnerable road users at the forefront

Reconsideration of the 'exceptional hardship' loophole to ensure basic safety for all road users

Focus on technology and improved infrastructure to best integrate e-scooters onto the roads

Nationwide regulations to ensure pavements are a designated pedestrian safe space

The extension of the Victims' Commissioner to include road crash victims to ensure they are given the after care and dignity they deserve

If you require further information, please contact:

Cara Elliott

Policy and Public Affairs Adviser

The Association of Consumer Support Organisations (ACSO)

cara.elliott@acso.org.uk

The Association of Consumer Support Organisations Limited is a company registered in England and Wales with registration number 11795612 and VAT number 315644020, registered office Castramont, Westbourne Drive, Lancaster United Kingdom LA1 5EE

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