



accidents don't have to happen

Road Safety: A Guide for Councillors in England



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Executive Summary

Roads are essential to our everyday lives and economic prosperity and we all use them by driving, riding, walking or travelling as a passenger. Unfortunately, people are killed and injured when using the road, but a comprehensive road safety strategy can reduce the number of deaths and injuries despite increasing traffic levels.

The UK has long been a leader in road safety, introducing key innovations like driver registration in 1903, the Highway Code in 1931, and the MOT test in 1960. These measures, alongside advances in car technology and driver behaviour, have led to a significant decline in road fatalities, from a peak of 7,985 deaths in 1966 to 1,624 in 2023, despite the increase in vehicle miles. However, road traffic incidents remain preventable, and the 1,624 deaths in 2023 highlight the ongoing need for improvement. Progress has slowed in recent years, with a mere 9% reduction in fatalities from 2014 to 2023, compared to a 47% decrease in the previous decade.

Central government sets the regulatory framework for roads, vehicles and road users, and the country's national road safety strategy. It:

- Provides funding and resources to local government and others to deliver road safety
- Commissions research into the nature, causes of, and potential solutions to, road casualties
- Collects and publishes road casualty data
- Conducts education and publicity campaigns
- Sets standards for road design, construction and maintenance
- Sets requirements for driver licensing, training and testing
- Sets standards for vehicles and requirements for vehicle licensing
- Sets road use laws, including offences and penalties, and guidance on safe road use, such as the Highway Code.

Local government is the main delivery agent of road safety. Local authorities have a statutory duty under section 39 of the [1988 Road Traffic Act](#) to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents”.

Upper Tier Local Authorities (such as County Councils, Metropolitan District Councils and Unitary Authorities) have legal responsibilities for highways and transportation in their area. Lower Tier Authorities (such as District Councils) do not but do help to deliver road safety services.

[Transport for London \(TfL\)](#) manages the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN), London's traffic lights, and transport services. The rest of London's road network is managed by London Borough Councils and the Common Council of the City of London, each of which is a Unitary Authority.

A range of officers are involved in creating safer road environments, including road engineers, planners and urban designers in close consultation with local communities to create a safer road environment.

Town and parish councils may also play an important role in road safety, for example by funding speed indication devices, traffic calming or community schemes. Many highway authorities have established forums to allow



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parish councils to request lower speed limits or improvements to road design. These represent important routes through which the wishes of local communities can be heard.

The police enforce road traffic laws, although some areas, such as parking enforcement, are the responsibility of local authorities. The police also co-operate with other agencies, such as the DVLA, DVSA, Highways England and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to enforce specific traffic laws and investigate serious work-related road accidents.

Roads policing supports and complements road safety education and engineering, and is an essential part of road safety. It:

- Deters illegal, dangerous and careless behaviour on the road
- Identifies offenders
- Identifies the causes of crashes
- Helps to educate, and change the attitudes of, road users
- Prevents other forms of crime
- Identifies and removes dangerous vehicles.

Fire and Rescue Services have duties to respond to road accidents under the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).

In addition to their core role of providing an emergency response service to road traffic collisions and extricating victims who are trapped in vehicles, most fire and rescue services are also active in local multi-agency partnerships in their area and many support or deliver road safety education programmes to help prevent accidents happening in the first place.

Employers play an important role in assessing and managing the risks faced and created by their staff when using the road for work. HSE [Driving at Work](#) Guidelines state that “*health and safety law applies to on-the-road work activities and the risks should be effectively managed within a health and safety system.*”

Every local authority needs to:

- Complete a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): This involves analysing the health and wellbeing needs of the local population to identify key priorities and inform decision-making.
- Establish a Health and Wellbeing Strategy and investment plan: This strategy outlines specific goals and allocates resources to improve public health outcomes in the community effectively.
- Prepare to commission public health services: This step ensures that the necessary services are planned, funded, and implemented to address identified health priorities in a systematic manner.

We strongly encourage local authorities to:

- Appoint a cabinet lead for road safety, to ensure that road safety remains high priority for local authority activity, and to improve accountability for legal duties.
- Adopt the Safe System approach and a long-term goal towards the ultimate prevention of death and serious injuries in road safety strategies and plans. This approach is built on five pillars: safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds, safe vehicles, safe road users, and effective post-crash response.
- Set measurable local targets to reduce the numbers of deaths and serious injuries with supporting road safety performance objectives that support the current Road Safety Statement and prioritising vulnerable road users.



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Police should:

- Increase levels of enforcement of key road safety rules related to the prevention of death and serious injury.
- Support improved crash investigation and encourage and facilitate the adoption of the CRASH reporting system by all police forces.
- Promote public awareness campaigns to educate the community on road safety rules and the risks associated with unsafe behaviours, ensuring consistent and accessible messaging to all demographics.

Business and civil Society should:

- Engage with and support the national drive to work towards the ultimate prevention of deaths and serious injuries and related objectives.
- Collaborate with local authorities and educational institutions to develop and implement road safety programs, fostering a culture of safety and responsibility among all road users.

As an elected councillor, you can help to ensure that your local authority has a comprehensive local road safety strategy that is effective in reducing road accidents and casualties. In particular, you can:

- Influence decision and policy making
- Ensure road safety services are evidenced-based and evaluated
- Ensure services are co-ordinated
- Champion road safety for all road users
- Support your council's scrutiny committee
- Ensure your council manages its occupational road risk.



Introduction

Roads are essential to our everyday lives and economic prosperity. We all use them in some way, by driving, riding, walking or travelling as a passenger, or depending on them to obtain goods and services. Unfortunately, people are killed and injured when using the road, but a comprehensive road safety strategy can reduce the number of people killed or injured on the road, despite increasing traffic levels.

Reported road deaths have reduced from about 5,500 a year in the mid 1980s to fewer than 1700 a year now. Over the same period, road casualties have decreased from 240,000 (including 75,000 serious injuries) to under 200,000 (including 24,000 serious injuries). Despite this, 28 people still die every week on our roads.¹

These are road casualties reported to the police and do not include tens of thousands of people who are injured in unreported crashes every year. Although virtually all fatal road crashes are reported, a considerable proportion of non-fatal casualties are not, even when those involved require medical or hospital treatment.

Apart from the human cost, road accidents cost billions of pounds and so preventing them saves billions as well as saving lives and reducing the number of injuries. The most recent official data from the DfT (Stats19) on reported road traffic collisions puts the total cost of road collisions at approximately £42 billion in 2023.²

There has also been a reduction in road safety provision. The National Audit Office estimated that in real terms, there was a 37% reduction in government funding to local authorities between 2010/11 and 2015/16.³ There has also been a 23% reduction in the number of full-time equivalent traffic police officers. However, not all forces have been affected by cuts equally, cuts range from 1% in Cheshire to 76% in Devon and Cornwall.⁴

Despite these challenges, local authorities help to keep their people alive and healthy by delivering road safety services that are evidence-informed, co-ordinated with other public services, designed and delivered in partnership and evaluated to ensure effectiveness. It is essential to continually evolve and implement strategies that address the changing landscape of road safety. These strategies involve a multifaceted approach that includes Education, Training, and Publicity, alongside Road Safety Engineering. This document explores these critical components, highlighting the roles of various stakeholders and the effectiveness of their interventions.

This latest version was updated in 2025 by RoSPA Road Safety Staff. This guide was originally produced in 2004 and updated in 2013 by a working Group comprising:

- Road Safety Great Britain www.roadsafetygb.org.uk
- PACTS, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety www.pacts.org.uk
- AIRSO www.airso.org.uk
- ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers www.acpo.police.uk
- Living Streets www.livingstreets.org.uk
- CTC www.ctc.org.uk
- RoSPA's National Road Safety Committee www.rospa.com

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¹ RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/reportn>

² Yass, I. (2010). *Delays Due to Serious Road Accidents*, RAC Foundation. Retrieved from: https://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/road%20accident%20delays%20-%20yass%20-%20april%20-%20report.pdf

³ National Audit Office. (2014). *The Impact of Funding Reductions on Local Authorities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/impact-of-funding-reductions-on-local-authorities.pdf>

⁴ PACTS. (2015). *Road Safety Since 2010*. Retrieved from: http://www.pacts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Road_Safety_Since_2010_Amos_Davies_Fosdick_PACTS_RAC_Foundation_interim_report_May_2015.pdf



Reported Road Casualties 2023

The long-term trend in road casualties in reported road accidents was broadly level between 1979 and 1998, allowing for natural variation in the number of casualties. Between 1998 and 2010 the general trend in road casualties was downward.

The UK has long been a leader in road safety, introducing key innovations like driver registration in 1903, the Highway Code in 1931, and the MOT test in 1960, as well as drink driving limits and progressively stricter mandatory seatbelt wearing. These measures, alongside advances in car technology and driver behaviour, have led to a significant decline in road fatalities, from a peak of 7,985 deaths in 1966 to 1,624 in 2023, despite the increase in vehicle miles.⁵ However, road traffic incidents remain preventable, and the 1,624 deaths in 2023 highlight the ongoing need for improvement. Progress has slowed in recent years, with a mere 9% reduction in fatalities from 2014 to 2023, compared to a 47% decrease in the previous decade, reflecting a concerning complacency in government action.⁵

In 2023, there were 28,086 seriously injured casualties and 103,267 slightly injured casualties in reported road traffic incidents.⁶

Figure 1: Reported road casualties by severity and road user type, 2023

| Road user group | Killed | Serious | Slight | All |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Car Occupants | 725 | 10,939 | 61,162 | 72,826 |
| Pedestrians | 405 | 6,067 | 12,791 | 19,263 |
| Motorcyclists | 315 | 5,481 | 11,182 | 16,978 |
| Pedal Cyclists | 87 | 3,942 | 10,970 | 14,999 |
| Other Road Users | 92 | 1,657 | 7,162 | 8,911 |
| Total | 1,624 | 28,086 | 103,267 | 132,977 |

⁵ RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/reportn>

⁶ Department for Transport. (2024). *Table RAS0201: Road User Type: Numbers and Rates, Great Britain, 2023*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>



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High-Risk and Vulnerable Groups

Some road users are at higher risk than others, including young drivers, older drivers, at-work drivers, motorcyclists, pedestrians, pedal cyclists and children. When planning road safety activities and priorities, the links between road accidents and deprivation should be considered to ensure that inequalities are addressed.

Children and adults in deprived areas face significantly higher risks of accidents and injuries compared to those in more affluent areas. In Scotland, death rates from unintentional injuries are nearly double the national average in the most deprived areas and 50% lower in the least deprived areas.⁷ Similarly, children in Northern Ireland's poorest communities are disproportionately affected by falls, burns, and scalds. In England and Wales, children of long-term unemployed parents are 13 times more likely to die from external causes than those from professional families, with disparities even greater for unintentional injuries involving pedestrians (21 times), cyclists (28 times), and fires (38 times).⁷

Injuries resulting from road collisions follow the same pattern. In London, the 30% most deprived areas see twice the rate of casualties per kilometre compared to the least deprived areas, and Glasgow shows a 41% lower casualty rate among its least deprived residents.⁷ These risks are compounded by broader health inequalities, with deprived populations more likely to have long-term illnesses, obesity, and physical inactivity, which worsen the severity and recovery time from injuries.

As a councillor, find out what groups are at risk in your area, and whether these groups are overrepresented when compared to similar areas. Knowing whether the total number of casualties is rising or falling is important but knowing how the figures are broken down is equally so. As a councillor, you should be aware of the high-risk groups in your authority, to help inform decisions about prioritising road safety resources.

Children

There were 59 child road deaths in 2023, with 11,684 child road casualties. Child road fatalities have fluctuated between 48 and 69 a year between 2010 and 2023 with no clear trend.⁸ Most child fatalities are pedestrians (25 in 2023) and car occupants (16 fatalities) because these are the main ways in which children travel on the road.⁸

Young Adult Road Users

The number of 17 to 24 year olds killed in reported road traffic accidents decreased from 285 in 2022 to 261 in 2023, following a general downward trend.⁸ Casualties involving younger drivers has reduced based on the 2010-14 average, however, young drivers aged 17-24 are still overrepresented in collision statistics. The fatality rate is 71% higher in under 25s than over 25s, while the rate of those killed and seriously injured is 64% higher. Young drivers are not only more likely to be killed or injured on the roads, but are also responsible for many other deaths and serious injuries; in 2022, 4,935 people were killed or seriously injured in collisions involving a young driver.⁷

Older Road Users (aged 60 years and over)

The number of fatalities aged 60 and over in reported road traffic incidents decreased from 574 in 2022 to 558 in 2023.⁸ There was an increase in older pedestrian deaths (172 in 2022 and 191 in 2023), but a decrease in older car driver fatalities (194 in 2022 and 177 in 2023, and a decrease in older car passenger fatalities (86 in 2022 and 72 in 2023).⁸

⁷ RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report>

⁸ Department for Transport. (2024). *Table RAS0102: Casualties and Casualty Rates, by Road User Type and Age Group Since 1979*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>



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The Main Causes

Almost all road crashes involve human error, ranging from simple mistakes to deliberately dangerous and illegal behaviour. There are usually several contributory factors, the most common of which are basic errors, such as failing to look properly, losing control of a vehicle, inappropriate speed and impairment or distraction. However, this does not mean that road users are solely responsible for preventing road casualties.

Poor Driving

Some road accidents are caused by poor driving, such as a driver or rider disobeying road signals and markings, following the vehicle in front too closely or driving aggressively, recklessly or in a hurry.

In 2023, 129 people were killed (9% of all road fatalities) and 2,722 injured (4% of all injury accidents) in an accident where a driver or rider had been driving aggressively. 292 people were killed (22% of all road fatalities) and 12,482 were injured (19% of all injury accidents) in an accident where the driver or rider involved was described as 'careless, reckless or in a hurry'.⁹

Inappropriate Speed

Exceeding the speed limit contributed to 289 fatal collisions in 2023, with travelling too fast for the conditions contributing to 111 fatalities.⁹ This contributes to 21% and 8% of all fatalities in 2023 respectively.⁹ Inappropriate speed therefore includes both driving at excessive speed and also driving or riding within the speed limit when this is too fast for the conditions at the time (for example, in poor weather, poor visibility or high pedestrian activity).

Not Wearing a Seatbelt

Seatbelts are designed to retain people in their seats, and so prevent or reduce injuries suffered in a crash. They ensure that as little contact is made between the occupant and vehicle interior as possible and significantly reduce the risk of being thrown from a vehicle. Seatbelts are designed to work as the key part of wider injury prevention measures and safety systems, such as airbags and head restraints, which will not be as effective in reducing the risk of injury if an occupant is not wearing a seatbelt.

Alcohol

Estimates for 2022 show that between 290 and 320 people were killed in collisions in Great Britain where at least one driver was over the drink-drive limit, with a central estimate of 300 deaths.¹⁰ Although the level of drinking and driving has dropped dramatically over the last three decades, hundreds of people are still killed in drink drive accidents every year. Despite over 30 years of drink drive education and enforcement, in 2023, police in England and Wales conducted 276,914 roadside breath tests, with 44,861 drivers or riders (16% of those tested) either failing or refusing to take the test.¹¹ This is a reminder that drink driving remains a serious problem.

Often it is an innocent person who suffers, not the driver who is over the drink drive limit. In 2022, 120 pedestrians were killed or seriously injured by drink drivers, as were 1,270 car occupants. 90 children were killed or seriously injured by drink drivers that year.¹⁰

⁹ Department for Transport. (2024). *Table RAS0701: Contributory Factors in Reported Accidents by Severity, Great Britain, 2023*.

Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain#factors-contributing-to-collisions-and-casualties-ras07>

¹⁰ Department for Transport. (2024). *Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: Estimates for Accidents Involving Illegal Alcohol Levels, 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-involving-illegal-alcohol-levels-2022/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-involving-illegal-alcohol-levels-2022>

¹¹ Home Office. (2023). *Police Powers and Procedures, England and Wales, Year Ending 31 March 2023*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/stop-and-search-and-arrests-year-ending-march-2023/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2023>



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Embedding a Safe System approach is evident in the Department for Transport's [British Road Safety Statement](#) (and its [2018 Progress Report](#)), [Road Safety Management Capacity Review](#), [Highways England's safety performance framework](#) and [Transport for London \(TfL\) Vision Zero for London](#) and [Vision Zero Action Plan](#).

A recent report recommended that the Government adopts performance indicators to help understand the processes that lead to crashes and recommended a set of performance indicators to measure progress.



Who Delivers Road Safety?

Central government sets the regulatory framework for roads, vehicles and road users, and the country's national road safety strategy. It:

- Provides funding and resources to local government and others to deliver road safety
- Commissions research into the nature, causes of, and potential solutions to, road casualties
- Collects and publishes road casualty data
- conducts education and publicity campaigns
- Sets standards for road design, construction and maintenance
- Sets requirements for driver licensing, training and testing
- Sets standards for vehicles and requirements for vehicle licensing
- Sets road use laws, including offences and penalties, and guidance on safe road use, such as the Highway Code.

Local Authorities

Local government is the main delivery agent of road safety. Local authorities have a statutory duty under section 39 of the [1988 Road Traffic Act](#) to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents”.

39 (1) The Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, provide for promoting road safety by disseminating information or advice relating to the use of roads.

39 (2) Each local authority must prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety and may make contributions towards the cost of measures for promoting road safety taken by other authorities or bodies.

39 (3) Each local authority –

[a] must carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads or part of roads, other than trunk roads, within their area,

[b] must, in the light of those studies, take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents, including the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of the roads, the giving of practical training to road users or any class or description of road users, the construction, improvement, maintenance or repair of roads for which they are the highway authority (in Scotland, local roads authority) and other measures taken in the exercise of their powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads, and

[c] in constructing new roads, must take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to reduce the possibilities of such accidents when the roads come into use.



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Upper Tier Local Authorities (such as County Councils, Metropolitan District Councils and Unitary Authorities) have legal responsibilities for highways and transportation in their area. Lower Tier Authorities (such as District Councils) do not but do help to deliver road safety services.

[Transport for London \(TfL\)](#) manages the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN), London's traffic lights, and public transport services. It has adopted a [Vision Zero for London](#) and a [Vision Zero Action Plan](#). The rest of London's road network is managed by London Borough Councils and the Common Council of London, each of which is a Unitary Authority.

The London Road Safety Council (LRSC) comprises elected councillors and professional road safety officers from the London boroughs, Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police and others. It aims to reduce needless casualties by producing and promoting resources and publicity materials and providing a forum to discuss road safety issues.

Most local authorities have a road safety team or at least a road safety officer. They provide professional expertise to identify the causes of problems and to help to identify, develop and deliver solutions to these problems. They do so through educational programmes, skills training e.g. cyclist and young driver training, and publicity campaigns and programmes to inform, raise awareness and to encourage positive and discourage negative behaviours by road users. Local Highways Authorities also have road safety engineering teams who identify and implement road design and engineering solutions to road casualty problems in their areas. The road safety education and engineering teams should work together, as well as in co-operation with other agencies, such as the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and others.

Local Authority officers also share knowledge and experience with each other across the country, in many ways, including through Road Safety GB, the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and the [Road Safety Knowledge Centre](#).

Many local authorities are introducing 20mph limit areas to reduce road risk, and encourage active travel, increase walking and cycling and improve air quality. They encourage and help drivers to keep to safe speeds as well as contribute towards healthier environments. 20mph limits and zones and the safe system approach can be embedded in strategic documents such as the local transport plan (LTP), joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) or road safety plan.

We know that lower speed limits reduce the severity of road collisions.¹² However, setting uniform speed limits centrally can sometimes lead to measures that do not align with local needs or circumstances. This is why there is a growing call for the government to empower local authorities to set lower speed limits, particularly in built-up areas where the risks to pedestrians and cyclists are higher.

A major review by the Department for Transport (DfT) has shown that a reduction in average speeds by just 1mph can lead to a 5% decrease in collision rates, depending on the road type.¹² Other modelling suggests that reducing speed from 30mph to 20mph can decrease the likelihood of fatal collisions with pedestrians or cyclists by over 80% (from around 78% to approximately 12%).¹² To put this into perspective, a car traveling at 20mph could stop in time to avoid hitting a child 3 car-lengths ahead, while at 25mph, the vehicle would still strike the

¹² RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/reportn>



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child with an impact similar to falling from a bedroom window.¹²

RoSPA supports the introduction of 20mph zones due to this overwhelming evidence of their effectiveness.¹³ We continue to monitor the "real-life" effects in regions like Wales, where 20mph zones have been implemented more widely.¹³

However, it is crucial that speed limit schemes have public buy-in to be successful. The most effective safety measures are those that are backed by the community. This underscores the need for an evidence-led approach when making the case to the public for reducing speed limits, especially in areas with high pedestrian or cyclist activity. Local authorities should be empowered to make decisions about speed limits in their communities, and it is essential that any changes be effectively enforced and communicated to the public. These schemes benefit from other activities, including:

Road Safety Education Training and Publicity (ETP)

Education deals with ideas and concepts such as hazard perception and managing personal risk in the road environment, developing coping strategies and understanding our personal responsibilities to other road users. It is a gradual process, which takes place over a number of years.

Training is mostly concerned with creating or developing practical skills, such as pedestrian training, cycle training, post-test driver training and motorcycle training. Central government funding is available for some activities, such as, the [Bikeability](#) cyclist training course.

Publicity is designed to provide information, raise awareness, give advice on appropriate behaviour and reinforce positive attitudes.

All aim to influence the behaviour of road users to reduce the risk of being involved in a road crash.

Road Safety Engineering

A range of officers are involved in creating safer road environments, including road engineers, planners and urban designers in close consultation with local communities to create a safer road environment that:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| WARNS | road users of any unexpected features or those requiring special attention |
| INFORMS | road users about what is expected |
| GUIDES | road users, making appropriate behaviour an easy choice |
| CONTROLS | road users as far as possible where conflicts may exist |
| FORGIVES | error or inappropriate behaviour. |

Road safety engineers and urban designers use a range of measures to enhance safety for all road users, particularly pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users. Their approach aims to accommodate a diverse range of needs, not just those of motor vehicles.

These safety measures include road surface improvements, junction redesigns, traffic calming schemes, 20 mph zones, enhanced walking and cycling facilities, and major road infrastructure upgrades. Many local authorities are also implementing active travel provisions and shared space designs, though guidance on shared spaces remains

¹³ RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/reportn>



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under review.

Local safety schemes, particularly area-wide or route-based initiatives, tend to have a more significant impact on reducing casualties compared to isolated interventions. These schemes offer excellent value for money and effectively address road accidents by considering the broader context of traffic patterns, user behaviour, and infrastructure design.

Planning and Development Control

Planning authorities regulate and control new developments. This presents opportunities to anticipate and avoid potential road hazards, and to make walking, cycling and the road environment safer at the design stage. It ensures that new road safety risks are not created and can provide extra road safety measures to reduce the effects of increased traffic and changes in routes resulting from residential or commercial developments.

Local Authorities Duty to Manage their Road Network

Local authorities also have a duty to manage and maintain their road networks under section 16 of the [Traffic Management Act 2004](#). This duty extends to ensuring the network is safe, accessible, and capable of handling both current and future demands. Local authorities are also expected to integrate road safety measures into their broader transport planning processes.

16 The network management duty

(1) It is the duty of a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives—

(a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network;

and

(b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

(2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing—

(a) the more efficient use of their road network; or

(b) the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority

Parish Councils

Town and parish councils may also play an important role in road safety, for example by funding speed indication devices, traffic calming or community schemes. Many highway authorities have established forums to allow parish councils to request lower speed limits or improvements to road design. These represent important routes through which the wishes of local communities can be heard.



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Town and parish councils represent the first tier of local government. While they do not have statutory highways responsibilities, they often act as a key route through which residents' views can be expressed. Improvements to transport are likely to be central elements in Neighbourhood Plans as they are developed at this level.

Additionally, with the growing emphasis on localism and community-driven development, parish councils continue to be a key channel through which local road safety wishes are communicated, and they remain central to delivering community-based solutions that align with local needs.

Other Road Safety Stakeholders

The Police

The police enforce road traffic laws, although some areas, such as parking enforcement, are the responsibility of local authorities. The police also co-operate with other agencies, such as the DVLA, DVSA, Highways England and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to enforce specific traffic laws and investigate serious work-related road accidents.

Roads policing supports and complements road safety education and engineering, and is an essential part of road safety. It:

- Deters illegal, dangerous and careless behaviour on the road
- Identifies offenders
- Identifies the causes of crashes
- Helps to educate, and change the attitudes of, road users
- Prevents other forms of crime
- Identifies and removes dangerous vehicles.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are accountable for how crime is tackled, including road safety issues, and for the overall delivery and performance of policing within each Police force area in England and Wales. The Police and Crime Panels scrutinise the work of each Commissioner to ensure transparency and accountability. These panels include representatives from local authorities within the police force area, who ensure that crime prevention and road safety priorities are effectively addressed. Since the devolution of certain powers, PCCs now have a larger role in shaping transport and infrastructure policies that impact road safety.

In London, Transport for London and the London Local Authorities have the power, under the [Traffic Management Act 2004](#) and the [London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2003](#), to take responsibility for the civil enforcement of a range of non-endorsable moving traffic offences.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) sets out their [Road Policing Strategy for 2022-2025](#), a three-year plan is designed to:

- prevent harm and save lives
- tackle crime on our roads
- explore the challenges and benefits of new technology
- influence public behaviour to ensure road safety



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Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

Fire and Rescue Services have duties to respond to road traffic accidents under the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).

8 Road traffic accidents

- (1) A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of —
 - (a) rescuing people in the event of road traffic accidents in its area;
 - (b) protecting people from serious harm, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, in the event of road traffic accidents in its area.
- (2) In making provision under subsection (1) a fire and rescue authority must in particular—
 - (a) secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements;
 - (b) secure the provision of training for personnel;
 - (c) make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel;
 - (d) make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1);
 - (e) make arrangements for ensuring that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or limit damage to property resulting from action taken for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1).

In addition to their core role of providing an emergency response service to road traffic collisions and extricating victims who are trapped in vehicles, most fire and rescue services are also active in local multi-agency road safety partnerships in their area and many support or deliver road safety education programmes to help prevent accidents happening in the first place.

Employers

Employers play an important role in assessing and managing the risks faced and created by their staff when using the road for work. HSE [Driving at Work](#) Guidelines state that “*health and safety law applies to on-the-road work activities and the risks should be effectively managed within a health and safety system.*”

A high proportion of road journeys are work-related (for example, delivering goods and driving to appointments), 22% of reported road crashes resulting in injuries (over 22,000 collisions) involve someone using the road for work.¹⁴ Action on work-related road risk could bring major benefits for local authorities and employers in their area.

Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do, and very few organisations operate without using motor vehicles. Millions of people use the road in order to do their job, and in doing so, they both face, and create, risks. UK law requires employers to treat driving, riding or otherwise using the road for work, the same as any other health and safety risk. They must conduct suitable risk assessments and take all “reasonably practicable measures” to manage the risks. There are a range of advice services and help for employers,

¹⁴ Department for Transport (2024). Table RAS0506: Journey Purpose. Received from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>



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including from the [Occupational Road Safety Alliance \(ORSA\)](#), [Driving for better Business \(DfBB\)](#) and the [Scottish Occupational Road Safety Alliance \(ScORSA\)](#)

Employers have duties under health and safety law to assess and manage their work-related road risks and some road traffic laws have 'cause or permit' offences which can apply to employers. Local authorities have many staff who drive, ride or walk on the road as part of their job, and your local authority should have policies and measures to manage its own work-related road safety risks. It is also well placed to help local employers to improve how they manage their occupational road risks. RoSPA has free resources to help employers: <https://www.rospace.com/road-safety/resources/free/employers/>.

Health Service

Since 1 April 2013, local authorities have taken responsibility for public health. They receive a ring-fenced public health grant, and are able to measure their success against the [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) which includes indicators on unintentional injury prevention.

Our National Accident Prevention Strategy¹⁵, highlights that over the last decade, accidental death rates have risen sharply – by 42%. 21,336 people died due to accidents in 2022, enough to fill London's O2 Arena. Accidents are the leading cause of preventable death in the under 40s. We estimate that around 840,000 people were admitted to hospital across the UK due to accidents in 2022/3, using up 5.2 million bed days. A further 7 million people attended A&E due to accidents. This costs the NHS at least £6 billion annually – and likely considerably more, as this excludes the cost of surgery and community services like GPs. Our Strategy sets out the context and background to this key public health issue, including new analysis into the scale of the problem, and provides measures to reduce road fatalities and injuries for Government to implement.

The most recent official data from the DfT (Stats19) on reported road traffic collisions puts the total cost of road collisions at approximately £42 billion in 2023¹⁶.

Public Health England have launched the [Fingertips Tool](#), which enables road safety professionals to benchmark road accident indicators in their area against the rest of the country and demographically similar regions. Profiles within the tool have been designed to support Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and commissioning to improve health and wellbeing, and reduce inequalities.

Every local authority needs to:

- Complete a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Establish a Health and Wellbeing Strategy and investment plan
- Prepare to commission public health services.

Other government organisations involved in the delivery of road safety

[National Highways](#) is an executive non-departmental public body in England, sponsored by the Department for Transport. It is responsible for operating, maintaining, and improving the strategic road network (SRN), which includes motorways and major A roads. Although the SRN comprises only about 2% of England's total road

¹⁵ . RoSPA (2024). *Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rospace.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report>

¹⁶ Department for Transport. (2024). *Table RAS4001: Reported Road Collisions, Vehicles and Casualties Tables for Great Britain*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain>



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length, it carries approximately a third of all motor vehicle traffic. A key component of its operations is the Traffic Officer Service, a uniformed workforce dedicated to patrolling the network. These officers play a crucial role in managing incidents, maintaining traffic flow, and ensuring road safety. Their responsibilities include clearing obstructions, coordinating with emergency services, and providing assistance to motorists in need.

[Transport Scotland](#) manages Scottish roads, the [Welsh Government](#) manages Welsh roads and [Transport for London](#) manages London roads, and the [Department for Infrastructure](#) manages roads in Northern Ireland. Local roads are managed by the relevant local authority.

The [Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency \(DVSA\)](#) is an executive agency of the Department for Transport. It conducts theory tests and driving tests for people who want to drive cars, motorcycles, lorries, buses, and coaches, and for MOT tests. It conducts driving tests for lorries and buses, carries out roadside checks on commercial drivers and vehicles, and monitors recalls of vehicles, parts, and accessories. It also approves training courses for lorry, bus, and coach drivers, and drink-drive rehabilitation courses. The DVSA supports the Traffic Commissioners and the transport regulators in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to license and monitor companies that operate lorries, buses, and coaches, and register local bus services. It employs driving test examiners, vehicle standards assessors, vehicle examiners, traffic examiners, registration and licensing officers.

The [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency \(DVLA\)](#) is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). It registers and licenses drivers and motorcyclists in Great Britain. It issues driving licences and vehicle registration certificates, records licence endorsements, disqualifications and medical conditions, takes enforcement action against vehicle tax evaders, registers and issues tachograph cards and helps the police and intelligence authorities deal with crime. It collects and enforces Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and maintains the records of over 48 million drivers and over 40 million vehicles.

In 2018, the [Road Safety Management Capacity Review \(RSMCR\)](#) was published to understand the institutional delivery of road safety in Britain and to identify practical opportunities to strengthen joint working, innovation and efficiency nationally and locally.

Other non-governmental organisations

A variety of organisations contribute to road safety efforts, including national and local charities like RoSPA and other groups involved in this guide.

Driver and motorcyclist trainers play a key role in promoting safer driving and riding through initial, refresher, and advanced courses. At RoSPA, we offer training to help improve skills, enhance safety, and reduce road risks.

Youth organisations like Scouts and Brownies, support road safety education through courses and achievement awards, while many community-based groups work locally to raise awareness and promote safe behaviours.

Public Health England

Public Health England also recognises the importance of the safe system approach as a proactive way of addressing road safety issues.¹⁷ It recommends key prevention opportunities for reducing child road casualties:

1. Improve safety for children travelling to and from school
2. Introduce 20mph limits in priority areas as part of a safe system approach to road safety
3. Action to prevent traffic injury and improve health works best when it is coordinated.

¹⁷ Public Health England, RoSPA, CAP. (2018). *Reducing Unintentional Injuries on the Roads Among Children and Young People Under 25 Years.*



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Complementary Road Safety and Public Health Strategies

Clean Air Strategies

The Government's [Clean Air Strategy](#) is increasingly encouraging local authorities to introduce clean air zones. These can support 20mph limits and vice versa.

Active Travel

The public health benefits of increasing the amount of walking and cycling are well established and many local authorities have cycling and walking strategies and plans.

Helping safer school travel

Local authorities provide School Crossing Patrols (SCPs) to help children walk to and from school safely. Road Safety Great Britain published "[Guidelines for the Management of the School Crossing Patrol Service](#)" to help local authorities to provide their School Crossing Patrol Service in the most cost-effective manner possible.

School Travel Plans

[Transport for London STARS](#), and [Modeshift STARS](#) are good examples of schemes that support schools to teach road safety and encourage journeys by foot, bicycle or scooter, help to reduce congestion, increase physical activity and provide a safer and cleaner environment. [Transport for London's Youth Travel Ambassadors scheme](#), which is a peer-led behaviour change programme for secondary schools, also encourages walking and cycling.

Promoting safer vehicles and vehicle technology

Many new vehicle technologies, such as intelligent speed adaptation (ISA) and autonomous braking systems, help drivers to drive more safely. Local authorities should monitor the types of vehicles that have higher crash risk, such as large goods vehicles, and are more likely to be involved, or to cause more serious injuries, in crashes, with pedestrians and cyclists.

An example is Transport for London's (TfL) Direct Vision Standard (DVS) for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) over 12 tonnes. This star-rating system, based on the driver's field of vision in relation to other road users, became fully operational in 2020. As of 2024, vehicles rated zero stars are banned from operating in London unless they meet Safe System requirements, including features such as sensors, cameras, and audible warnings to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. TfL continues to expand its efforts, enhancing safety regulations for vulnerable road users.

Securing driver understanding of and compliance with speed limits

Safety cameras, especially average speed cameras, are an effective way of encouraging drivers to comply with the relevant speed limit. It's important to discuss enforcement measures with the local police force and the safety camera partnership if there is one in your area. It is important that local authorities discuss and agree with them how and where they will be able to undertake enforcement activities. The local Fire and Rescue Service may be able to support safe speed messages and campaigns.



Getting the Most Out of Limited Road Safety Resources

Making effective use of road safety resources means ensuring that they are targeted at the council's most pressing road safety needs. These should be identified through analysis of the council's road casualty data and trends, demographic data, and analysis of local, national and international research. It should also include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of road safety measures and programmes in addressing the road safety problems. This will help to inform the design of planned road safety programmes.

Road Safety Data

Good road casualty data is essential to ensure that limited resources are targeted at the right groups, areas and issues, in the right priority order and in the most effective way. It is essential to identify the problems that need to be tackled and the most appropriate ways of doing so, otherwise there is the very real risk of spending those resources ineffectively.

The police collect data from reported road accidents, which is held by the local authority or an organisation contracted to the local authority. Your Council's road safety department will constantly monitor its database of accidents and casualties on the authority's roads to understand what types are occurring, where, when and how, who is involved, and the likely causes. This enables them to identify priority problem areas, roads and/or groups (e.g., young drivers) and to plan road safety programmes to reduce the likelihood and severity of these accidents recurring. If no action is taken, they will continue to occur.

Road casualty records from around the country are compiled into a national report, [Reported Road Casualties Great Britain](#), published annually by the Department for Transport.

The [Marmot Review](#) in 2010 into health inequalities, subsequently reviewed in [2020](#), proposed an evidence-based strategy to address the social determinants of health. It asserted that universal action was needed to reduce the steepness of the social gradient of health inequalities (rather than focusing on just the bottom 10 per cent), but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. Aligning interventions with Marmot's recommendations would make an important contribution to reducing both accidents and health inequalities.

Sources of Research Evidence

Some local authorities produce or commission reviews of their casualty situation or of particular groups of road users.

Useful online tools that provide access to a wide range of road safety research and good practice include:

- [Road Safety Evaluation](#)
- [Reported Road Casualties Great Britain](#)
- [Road Safety Observatory](#)
- [Road Safety Knowledge Centre](#)
- [Safety Cube Project](#)
- [Transport Advice Portal](#)
- [Public Health England Fingertips Tool](#)
- [Marmot Review](#)

There is a considerable evidence of the effectiveness of accident prevention programmes, in injury reduction and saving costs to health care. Many interventions are low cost, and investment can be recouped even if relatively few injuries are prevented.



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Evaluation

It is important to assess whether and how road safety programmes have achieved their aims (and if not, why not) so that future road safety programmes can be improved.

Publishing the results of evaluations also helps to share any lessons learned. Evaluation results become part of the evidence base for road safety.

Help and guidance on planning and conducting evaluations of road safety programmes is available through updated online tools and platforms. A prominent example is the Road Safety Evaluation Toolkit (<https://roadsafetyevaluation.com/introduction/>), which provides road safety practitioners with resources to plan, execute, and report the outcomes of evaluations. Further information and updated resources can be found at relevant government websites or road safety professional bodies, including the Road Safety Foundation and the Road Safety Observatory.

Partnership

A multi-agency, partnership approach allows resources to be shared and maximised and widens the pool of expertise available to all the partners. Councils are in an ideal position to act as hubs for partnerships which can improve the road safety of their constituents, and have considerable experience of working in this way.

Road Safety Partnerships

Road Safety Partnerships operate across the country based around police force areas; many are called Casualty Reduction Partnerships.

Road safety often features in local authority community safety partnerships. Their main aim is to work together in a co-ordinated approach to reduce the number of casualties on the roads in the Partnership's area, and make the best use of their combined efforts and resources. Public health is an increasingly important partner for local authorities.



What You Can Do as an Elected Councillor

As an elected councillor, you can help to ensure that your local authority has a comprehensive local road safety strategy that is effective in monitoring and reducing road accidents and casualties. In particular, you can:

Influence Decision and Policy Making

Road safety affects everyone; communities are very sensitive to road safety issues such as speeding, heavy vehicles and so on. You will be faced with tough decisions about allocating finite resources between competing priorities, which may affect the resources available for road safety. Therefore, it is important that you are familiar with the value of road safety to your community and the links with other policies. You can inform and influence decisions through your cabinet or committee structure to ensure that road safety resources are used to the best effect, that opportunities to improve road safety are not missed and possible adverse effects are fully understood. If you sit on other Council committees you can raise road safety on their agendas. If you also sit on other bodies (such as a school governing body or a Health and Well-Being Board), this is also an opportunity to encourage joint working.

Many councils operate some form of area committee system, which is often a perfect arena for considering local road safety issues with other councillors and the public. Area committees can allow comparisons between schemes at a more local level in a transparent way.

Ensure Road Safety Services are Evidenced-based and Evaluated

Road safety priorities and programmes should be based on casualty data and road safety research, and be evaluated, to ensure that the authority's limited resources are used in the most effective way in response to the most pressing road safety needs. This evidence supports and underpins why and how decisions are made and demonstrates that the approach is both objective and fair. Your responsibility is to check the data is accurate and to help present it to the public.

Ensure Services are Co-ordinated

The interaction between human factors and road features has important implications for road use, and highlights the need for engineers, road safety officers, roads police officers and others to work closely together. These disciplines can only work effectively if they are linked, so that engineers understand how people use and interact with the road network, road signs and so on and so road safety officers and the police can report back to engineers to outline their experiences of how things work. Councillors are in a unique position to enhance this partnership and to make sure that officers are working closely with colleagues and other agencies.

Champion Road Safety for All Road Users

Councillors often receive complaints from constituents before they are reflected in the casualty statistics. You can bring this information to the attention of officers for further investigation and make constituents aware of the authority's response. A challenge is how to respond to constituents' calls for action to prevent what they believe is an "accident waiting to happen" at a particular location. With limited resources, it is even more important to target road safety at actual rather than perceived road safety problems. There is a real challenge when balancing requests from residents with the need to allocate resources across the whole of your council's area.

Local residents will campaign for action on their own street and will expect your support. You must balance your role as local champion against that as a councillor with responsibility for your whole area. Road Safety Officers will be able to present the evidence, but if it shows that a perceived problem is not an actual road safety



problem, this can be difficult to convey. A perceived problem may be a barrier to people choosing to walk and cycle, and so may justify action as part of the council's overall sustainable travel strategy.

Support Your Council's Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny is a key part of local authority structure and practice. Scrutiny Committees help to ensure the council's policies, plans, decisions and actions are made in the community's best interest. They give councillors, officers and members of the public an opportunity to consider new ideas and challenge existing policies. It can be a great way of challenging evidence and assumptions, as well as bringing partners together and looking at new ideas for reducing accidents and casualties on your roads.

Scrutiny Committees consider a council's road safety policies (for example, whether to adopt a 20mph limit policy or a clean air zone), so it is essential that the committee has reliable and comprehensive evidence on which to base its decisions. As a scrutineer, you will want to see the evidence for what your council is doing or plans to do. Consider speaking to other key partners as well as your own officers and cabinet members.

Many other scrutiny committees across the country have looked at various aspects of road safety. Check the [Centre for Public Scrutiny](#) or go to the library for copies of reports which provide useful information.

Co-ordination with Other Policy Areas

Road safety services can complement, and be mutually supportive of, many of your council's other service areas, and vice versa. For example:

- Wider transport strategy
- Trading standards
- Environmental health
- Economic development
- Health
- Education
- Land use
- Community cohesion
- Social services
- Planning
- Regeneration
- Environment

