



Cycle awareness campaigns for drivers

THIS BRIEFING COVERS

Success of the drink-driving campaign; checklist of good and bad practice for cycle awareness campaigns; case studies: online/poster campaigns; vehicle stickers; what drivers need to know.

HEADLINE MESSAGES

- Sustained campaigns to improve road users' behaviour can be beneficial, as long as they are well-designed and targeted. The Government has, for example, tackled drink-driving effectively over the years through an awareness campaign backed up by law enforcement.
- To be effective, driver awareness campaigns need to convey positive, memorable and truthful messages, and avoid giving the misleading impression that problem behaviour from cyclists causes anything like as much harm as problem behaviour from drivers.

KEY FACT

There were 1,640 drink-drive fatalities in 1979. Since 2010, annual figures have been around 85% (more than 6 times) lower. Strong public awareness campaigns contributed to this success.

Cycling UK VIEW

- Driver awareness campaigns relating to cycle safety should **either** convey positive messages about considerate and respectful road sharing by both groups, **or**, if aimed at addressing problem behaviours, they should deliver simple memorable messages to one group or the other, based on understanding why those behaviours occur.
- Campaigns purporting to be even-handed by urging both drivers and cyclists not to engage in problem behaviours, create a false equivalence between the offences of the two groups. They are also poorly targeted in terms of actually influencing behaviour.
- Tackling offending behaviour by cyclists is best done by engaging positively with the cycling community to mobilise peer pressure, e.g. through the cycling press or cycle trainers, rather than by 'pandering to the gallery' using simplistic negative stereotypes in public awareness campaigns.

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

MUSIC
MOBILE
SANDWICH

OR SEEING THE CYCLIST?

MOMENTS BEFORE A COLLISION, SOMEONE MAKES A POOR DECISION.

Road Safety GB
Safer Roads Partnership

THINK! WWW.WHATMATTERSMOST.ORG.UK

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cycling UK view:

- Driver awareness campaigns relating to cycle safety should **either** convey positive messages about considerate and respectful road sharing by both groups, **or**, if aimed at addressing problem behaviours, they should deliver simple memorable messages to one group or the other, based on understanding why those behaviours occur.
- Campaigns purporting to be even-handed by urging both drivers and cyclists not to engage in problem behaviours, create a false equivalence between the offences of the two groups. They are also poorly targeted in terms of actually influencing behaviour.
- Tackling offending behaviour by cyclists is best done by engaging positively with the cycling community to mobilise peer pressure, e.g. through cycle trainers, rather than by 'pandering to the gallery' using simplistic negative stereotypes in public awareness campaigns.

The experience of the Government's long-term campaign to tackle drink-driving suggests that raising public awareness of a road safety issue *and* combining it with enforcement activity, makes an impact on behaviour.

Detailed reporting on drink-drive crashes began in 1979, when there were 1,640 fatalities in drink drive incidents, out of 6,352 road deaths overall. Since then, drink drive deaths have gone down by 85%, compared to an overall drop of 72%.¹ Revealing the results of a survey marking the 50th anniversary of their campaign, the DfT reported: "Of those surveyed, 91% agreed drink driving was unacceptable and 92% of people said they would feel ashamed if they were caught drinking and driving. This compares to over half of male drivers and nearly two thirds of young male drivers who admitted drink driving on a weekly basis in 1979."²

Such campaigns strengthen public support for enforcement activity, while the related enforcement activity reinforces the campaign's impact by punishing irresponsible drivers who ignore its message. This synergistic interaction between enforcement and public messages is important – evidence to suggest that driver awareness campaigns work effectively on their own is limited. This approach has also attracted the support of motoring organisations, including the RAC, who back calls from motorists for more investment in driver awareness and in roads policing.³

Funding decisions on road safety awareness campaigns should be based on the scale of the problem in question, and/or the safety benefits of tackling it. Key issues include: drivers' failure to look before turning at junctions and/or roundabouts; speeding; distraction (e.g. by mobile phones); close overtaking (including on bends); and opening car doors without looking. Drivers also need to be made aware of why cyclists often ride away from the kerb (i.e. to avoid potholes, to be visible, to deter cars from overtaking them when it's too narrow to do so safely, etc.).

Such messages may be disseminated in a variety of ways, e.g. online, videos, posters, vehicle stickers etc. See next page for Cycling UK's checklist of good and bad practice.

- See Cycling UK's briefings on *Traffic law and enforcement: Overview* and on *Traffic police and other enforcement agencies*, both at: www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings



✓ **Cycling UK believes that driver/cyclist awareness campaigns should:**

- ✓ **Be positive in tone and promote good behaviour:** people are more receptive to positive messages than judgmental, lecturing and/or negative ones.
- ✓ **Adopt a single, simple and memorable message,** e.g. *Think once, think twice, think bike*, the DfT's Think! campaign to make drivers more aware of motorcyclists.
- ✓ **Take account of what lies behind the irresponsible behaviour in question:** this helps pitch the message persuasively and makes sure that it's sent out through the right channels. For instance, irresponsible cyclists may be influenced by peer-pressure, suggesting that it's best to disseminate messages through cycle training networks or the cycling press.
- ✓ **Be supported by related enforcement activity,** as in the case of drink-driving.

✗ **Cycling UK believes that driver/cyclist awareness campaigns should not:**

- ✗ **Be judgmental, lecturing or negative:** being positive is a much better approach. Adults resent being lectured about their behaviour, even from 'authoritative' figures, particularly if they aren't guilty of it.
- ✗ **Be multi-purpose,** i.e. trying to address problem behaviours among drivers and cyclists alike in the same campaign (e.g. *'Drivers and Cyclists are More Alike than you Think'*, DfT, see p5). Although this approach might appeal politically because it seems to be even-handed, it has too many targets, both in terms of road users and messages. It also tends to portray drivers and cyclists' offences as being equally problematic in safety terms, when the available evidence clearly indicates that this is generally not the case.
- ✗ **Pander to public stereotypes,** i.e. suggest that all cyclists ride on the pavement and jump red lights. This reinforces negative attitudes towards cycling, and offends responsible cyclists who are in the majority.
- ✗ **Be untruthful, evasive and/or exaggerate:** it is inaccurate to suggest that cyclists share at least equal (if not greater) responsibility for their own collisions; and it is unfair to portray their offending as more dangerous than it truly is. Most cycling offences are not actually dangerous, even though they may be annoying to drivers and in some cases seriously intimidate or even endanger pedestrians. *Note:* Cycling UK fully supports responsible and lawful behaviour by all road users, and does not condone offending behaviour by cyclists.¹
 'Shock tactics' are, therefore, most appropriate for campaigns against genuinely hazardous behaviour (e.g. speeding by car drivers), but they are not appropriate for messages aimed at cyclists. Equally, road safety campaigns should not exaggerate the efficacy of personal safety equipment, such as helmets.²
- ✗ **'Play to the gallery':** the aim of any awareness campaign must be to improve the behaviour in question, not merely to be seen to be doing something about it for PR purposes. This includes targeting behaviour that is more 'anti-social' than genuinely 'dangerous'. It is much better to invest effort in investigating and solving the underlying cause (e.g. hostile road conditions that lead to pavement cycling).

Notes 1 & 2: For more on cyclists' behaviour and on helmets, see our briefings on each subject at:

www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings



CASE STUDIES

a. Police awareness/enforcement campaigns

- **West Midlands Police 'close pass' campaign**



In 2016, West Midlands Traffic Police launched an ongoing campaign specifically to re-educate drivers who overtake cyclists too closely.

The force dispatch plain clothes officers on bikes to look out for drivers who fail to give them enough room when overtaking. The officers radio the driver's details to colleagues, who pull them over and, on a 'safe pass' mat, demonstrated how to overtake safely.

The police report that driving behaviour in the local area changed overnight, with a 50% reduction in reported close pass offences in the first three months.

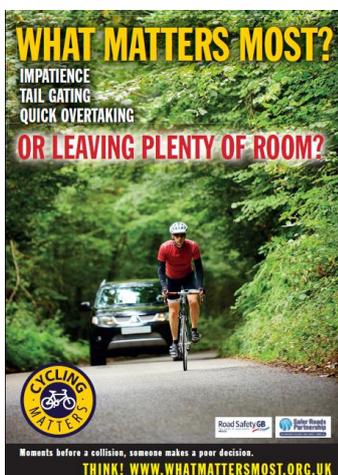
The operation received widespread national and international coverage, and was warmly received by road safety and cycle campaign groups. Cycling UK was so impressed by the initiative that it appealed for funds to buy mats for all other forces in the UK.

www.west-midlands.police.uk/latest-news/news.aspx?id=4942

b. Online/poster campaigns

- **'What Matters Most'**

Launched in March 2013, 'What Matters Most' is a publicity campaign, plus online information resource, managed by the Safer Roads Partnership in West Mercia. It is targeted at all road users, but emphasises the needs, concerns and safety of cyclists in particular. Distraction is the main focus. The aim is "to provide hints, tips and guidance for everyone so as to improve understanding, tolerance and the appreciation of one simple fact ... we are all just trying to get from A to B safely."

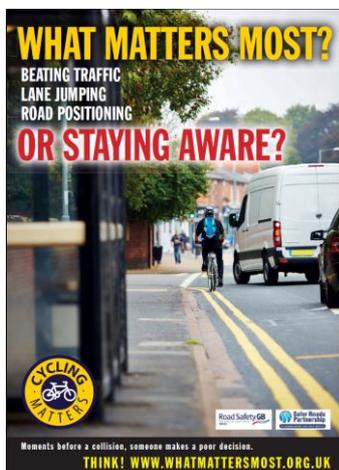


✓ **Good points:**

The website says: "Dictatorial voices, 'finger-pointing' and patronising advice have no place here; this is about sharing reasonable concerns, offering intelligent advice and inspiring a more focused mind-set in drivers, motorcyclists and cyclists who wish to stay safe and do no harm to others."

The campaign focuses primarily on simple errors and poor decisions made by drivers that could put cyclists at risk. Most of the messages and graphics (mainly downloadable posters) are simple, well communicated, don't lay blame or make any explicit or implicit judgements about cyclists' behaviour.

For example, one poster (see front page of this briefing) asks drivers to think about whether it's more important to make a call on a mobile or eat a sandwich at the wheel than see a cyclist; and another asks whether impatience, tail-gating or quick overtaking matters more than leaving a cyclist plenty of room (poster left).



✘ **Bad point:**

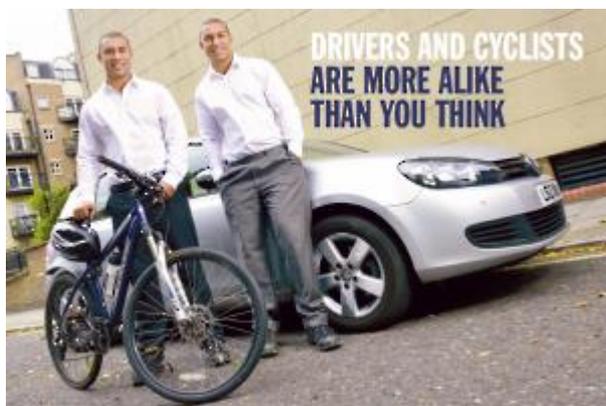
Unfortunately, the campaign has added one ambiguous, unclear and less satisfactory poster that illustrates a cyclist approaching a junction with a side road, whilst a van looks as if it is about to turn left in front of him. Not only is it impossible to tell how the situation arose, it is also not immediately clear from the poster itself who the target of the 'staying aware' message is.

The explanatory text on the website, however, seems to be pointing the finger at the cyclist – it says: *“Let’s be fair and balanced about this campaign . . . some cyclists could make themselves safer just by concentrating, thinking carefully about where they are positioned on the road and indicating their intentions properly for everyone else.”* Yet there is no indication that the cyclist is riding irresponsibly or not concentrating – although it is clear that the van driver should not be turning left in front of him.

Blaming both the cyclist pictured in the poster and cyclists in general in an attempt to be ‘even-handed’ undermines an otherwise sound campaign, whose stated principles include a commitment to avoid finger-pointing.

www.whatmattersmost.org.uk

- **Drivers and Cyclists are More Alike Than You Think (DfT)**



✓ **Good point:**

The campaign’s poster image (left) succeeded in providing an entirely positive message for drivers and cyclists alike and Cycling UK would have been happy to endorse it.

✘ **Bad points:** Cycling UK, in common with other groups, had strong objections to some of the supporting messaging on the campaign website and other accompanying materials.

Together with Sustrans, British Cycling and others, we raised concerns about the advice to drivers to leave “at least a car’s width” when overtaking a cyclist (this is far too little in many situations, undermining the advice in rule 163 of the Highway Code). In response, the DfT changed the wording to: "Give cyclists plenty of space when over taking them, leaving as much room as you would give a car. If there isn’t sufficient space to pass, hold back. Remember that cyclists may need to manoeuvre suddenly if the road is poor, it’s windy or if a car door is opened." This is much better advice for drivers, but we are still unhappy about the campaign’s advice on helmets. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252070/think-cyclist-toolkit.pdf

We were also concerned that the campaign budget was a mere £80,000, a tiny sum if the Government genuinely wanted to influence public attitudes and behaviour on a national scale.

For more see: www.cyclinguk.org/government-think-cycling-campaign-misses-bigger-picture.



Vehicle stickers

Vehicle stickers are often used to warn cyclists not to undertake lorries because of the hazards these particular vehicles pose when turning left (mainly because drivers may fail to see them). Again, Cycling UK believes that they should be clear and avoid disseminating misleading messages.

- ✓ **Cycling UK believes that:**
- ✓ Warnings are more effective than commands, e.g. 'Watch Out' rather than 'Stay Back'.
- ✓ 'Stay Back' is good advice to any cyclist approaching a large vehicle from behind, but on a sticker it may give the driver the misleading impression that cyclists are breaking the law if they undertake or overtake them. It also implies that it is a cyclist's responsibility not to put themselves in this position rather than a driver's responsibility to look out for them.
- ✓ Warning stickers should only be used on the rear of high-cab lorries, because of their so-called 'blind spots'. They should not be used on buses, small vans or taxis, i.e. vehicles whose drivers all have adequate vision of the road around them and should have no difficulty being careful around cyclists and pedestrians.
- ✓ All drivers, but especially those in charge of vehicles with inadequate visibility, should be reminded of the risks from turning without care and failing to consult their nearside mirrors as required of them by the Highway Code.

CASE STUDIES: Vehicle stickers



✓ Good examples⁴:

The sign on the far left clearly warns cyclists against undertaking a lorry.

The 'Watch Out' sticker (left) uses easily understood imagery – i.e. the iconography of internationally understood road signs – rather than relying on words. This means that cyclists, including those whose first language isn't English, can understand it quickly and easily.

It also gets its message across clearly but without being scary, or suggesting that it is illegal to pass a vehicle on the left hand side. Also, being 2-dimensional, it isn't obvious whether the cyclist is acting foolishly or actually staying back – i.e. it's a genuine warning without being judgemental.

✗ Bad example:

This notice (right), based on a prohibitive traffic sign, gives drivers the false impression that cyclists passing on the left side are lawbreakers. As a result, they may not drive with as much care as they should and, in the event of a collision, blame the cyclist even though there is a clear duty of care for drivers to look out and not turn across the path of cyclists at junctions. Sometimes, of course,





Cycle awareness: what drivers need to know

Always look carefully for cyclists before pulling out at a junction or roundabout. Around three quarters of collisions involving cyclists happen at or near junctions.⁵

Always look carefully for cyclists before making any turning manoeuvre or changing lanes in slower-moving/stationary traffic. This is particularly important for lorry drivers.

Leave plenty of space when overtaking a cyclist, i.e. at least a car's width when overtaking at lower speeds (20-30mph); and allow even more space: (a) when travelling at higher speeds; (b) when driving a lorry or any other large vehicle; (c) in poor weather (rain makes it harder for cyclists to see potholes and reduces grip; and wind gusts can cause them to wobble).

Never cut in/turn left sharply after overtaking a cyclist. Drivers do not appreciate this either when other drivers do it to them.

Wait for a cyclist to ride through a pinch point (i.e. a road narrowing caused by something like a pedestrian refuge) before driving past, unless you are absolutely certain that there is enough room to overtake them at a safe distance.

Drive at a considerate speed; don't accelerate or (without very good reason) brake rapidly around cyclists; or follow them impatiently/too closely. 'Tailgating' intimidates drivers *and* cyclists.

Before turning out of a minor into a major road, wait for any cyclist riding along the major road to pass you. Don't turn out in front of them.

Don't try to squeeze past oncoming cyclists if there is not enough room to do so safely.

Make it obvious to a cyclist that you have seen them (apparent inattention is confusing).

Signal intentions clearly to cyclists. Again, drivers expect this of other drivers and it causes them stress if it doesn't happen.

Make sure you understand how advanced stop lines (ASLs) and mandatory/advisory cycle lanes work and the regulations that apply. Also, be aware of cycle symbols painted on the road and understand why they are there.

Do not park in cycle lanes, as this forces cyclists using them to pull out into the main stream of traffic, a manoeuvre that could put them at risk.

Do not get impatient with cyclists who ride away from the kerb/parked cars. Cyclists are trained *not* to hug the kerb. This is because cycling away from the gutter increases their visibility and helps them avoid the risks of a) parked car doors opening on them; b) being overtaken where this would be dangerous; and c) having to swerve towards the traffic stream to avoid potholes.

Look out for cyclists before opening a car door, and make sure your passengers do likewise. It is an offence to injure or simply endanger someone by opening a vehicle door, or permitting someone else to do so.⁶ If dropping off a passenger when stationary at traffic lights, make sure they check for cyclists riding up on the inside or outside.

It is not compulsory for cyclists to use cycle tracks beside the road. All too many of these tracks are not properly designed/maintained, and/or may be obstructed. It is often better for cyclists (especially faster cyclists) to ride on the carriageway, both for their own and pedestrians' safety.

Cyclists riding in groups are not required to keep in single file and often ride two abreast on narrow and winding lanes in the interests of safety. If they form a long, single-file line, drivers may try to overtake only to find that they are forced to pull in dangerously by oncoming vehicles. Riding two abreast is a way of deterring drivers from dangerous overtaking manoeuvres.

Aggressive behaviour is inappropriate towards all road users, including cyclists.



FURTHER READING/WEBSITES

- Cycling UK briefings on:

Cyclists' behaviour and the law; Cycle training; Helmets; Traffic police and other enforcement agencies; Traffic law and enforcement overview; Road safety overview; Common driving offences

All at www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings

¹ DfT. Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: *Estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels: 2014 (final) and 2015 (provisional)*. August 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543627/rrcgb-drink-drive-final.pdf

² DfT. *Massive change in attitude to drink driving since THINK! campaign launched 50 years ago*. DfT press release 7/11/2014. www.gov.uk/government/news/92-of-people-feel-ashamed-to-drink-and-drive-as-50th-anniversary-think-campaign-is-launched

³ RAC. *Report on Motoring 2012. Call to Action*.

www.rac.co.uk/advice/reports-on-motoring/rac-report-on-motoring-2012/content-chapters/rac-call-to-action/ points 8 & 9).

⁴ The wording on the far left hand image from Transport for London (TfL) was agreed with London Cycling Campaign (LCC) in 2006. The right hand image won a national design competition for an easily understood image. For more on stickers, see:

<http://www.cyclinguk.org/news/cycling-and-safety-groups-object-to-tfl-sticker-on-vans-and-buses> (Cycling UK News 21/2/2014).

⁵ DfT. *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2015*. Sept 2016. Table RAS20006.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics>

⁶ *The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986* (section 105) says: "No person shall open, or cause or permit to be opened, any door of a vehicle on a road so as to injure or endanger any person." You don't even have to injure someone to be guilty of an offence, just endangering them is enough; and it applies to passengers as well as drivers.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 says it is offence not to comply with the *Construction and Use Regulations*. The driver could argue mitigating factors, of course – cyclist riding too close etc.