

Cycle awareness campaigns for drivers

THIS BRIEFING COVERS

- Headline messages; CTC's view; Key facts and arguments: success of the drink-driving campaign; checklist of good and bad practice for cycle awareness campaigns; case studies: online/poster campaigns; vehicle stickers. Further reading/websites; Footnotes and references.

HEADLINE MESSAGES

- Sustained campaigns to improve road users' behaviour can be beneficial, if 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.

CTC 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' poster (see 'Case Study', p4)

KEY FACTS AND ARGUMENTS

CTC 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, when combined with related enforcement activity, makes an impact on behaviour. According to a report for the Department for Transport (DfT), "...drink-driving laws, enforcement strategies and advertising campaigns have led to a long-term downward trend in the number of people killed and injured in accidents where a driver was over the limit."¹ Detailed reporting on drink-drive crashes began in 1979, when there were 1,640 fatalities – the figures for 2010-2012 are around six times lower than this.²

Such campaigns strengthen public support for enforcement activity, while the related enforcement activity re-enforces the impact of the campaign by punishing irresponsible drivers who ignore the its message. This synergistic interaction between enforcement and public messages is important – there is limited evidence to suggest that driver awareness campaigns work effectively on their own. This approach also attracts the support of motoring organisations, including the RAC³, who back calls from motorists for more investment in driver awareness and in roads policing.

Spending on road safety awareness campaigns should be prioritised on the basis of evidence of the scale of the safety problem they seek to tackle, and/or the safety benefits of tackling that problem. Key problems for campaigns to address include: drivers' failure to look before turning at junctions and/or roundabout entries; speeding; distraction (e.g. use of mobile phones); close overtaking (including on bends); and opening car doors without looking. Drivers also need to be aware of why cyclists often have to position themselves 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.).

The messages of awareness campaigns are disseminated in a variety of ways – online, videos, posters, vehicle stickers etc. See next page for CTC's checklist of good and bad practice.

- For more on law enforcement, see CTC's briefings on *Traffic law and enforcement: Overview* and on *Traffic police and other enforcement agencies*, both at: www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings



✓ CTC believes that driver/cyclist awareness campaigns *should*:

- ✓ **Be positive-toned and promote good behaviour:** people are more likely to take heed of positive messages than judgmental, lecturing and/or negative communications.
- ✓ **Adopt a single, simple and memorable message,** e.g. the DfT's Think! campaign to promote driver awareness of motorbike safety, *'Think once, think twice, think bike.'*
- ✓ **Take the motivations behind irresponsible behaviour into consideration:** this will help make sure that the message is persuasively pitched and targeted via the best channels for reaching its intended recipients. For instance, irresponsible cyclists may be more responsive to peer-pressure from fellow cyclists than anyone else, suggesting that cycle trainers could be used for campaigns to promote responsible behaviour.
- ✓ **Be supported by related enforcement activity,** as in the case of drink-driving.

✗ CTC believes that driver/cyclists awareness campaigns *should not*:

- ✗ **Be judgmental, lecturing and negative:** positivity is a better approach - adults resent being lectured on their behaviour, even from 'authoritative' figures, particularly if they are not guilty of the behaviour in question.
- ✗ **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, to work effectively. 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. *Note:* CTC fully supports responsible and lawful behaviour by all road users, and does not condone offending behaviour by cyclists.¹

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, particularly those with mobility or sensory impairments. 'Shock tactics', therefore, may be 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':** if there is a need to tackle specific forms of misbehaviour by cyclists, the aim must be to improve the behaviour in question, not merely to be seen to be doing something about it for PR purposes. This includes behaviour that is more 'anti-social' than genuinely 'dangerous'. It is much better to invest effort in investigating and solving the underlying cause for the behaviour (e.g. hostile road conditions that lead to pavement cycling). Cycling specific channels (e.g. cycle training networks) are the best means of disseminating messages about cyclists' behaviour.

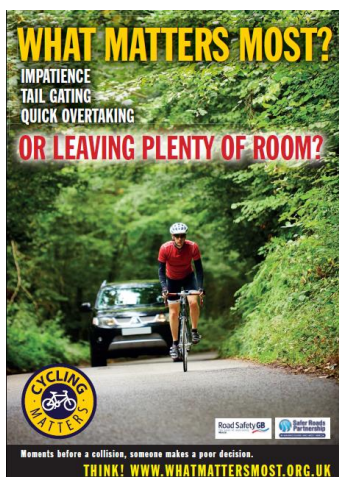
Notes 1 & 2: For more on cyclists' behaviour and on helmets, see our briefings on each subject at:

www.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings

CASE STUDIES: Online/poster campaigns

a. 'What Matters Most' - www.whatmattersmost.org.uk

Launched in March 2013, 'What Matters Most' is a publicity campaign, plus online information resource, managed by a large group of Midlands-based road safety professionals. It is targeted at all road users, but with a particular emphasis on the needs, concerns and safety of cyclists. 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."*

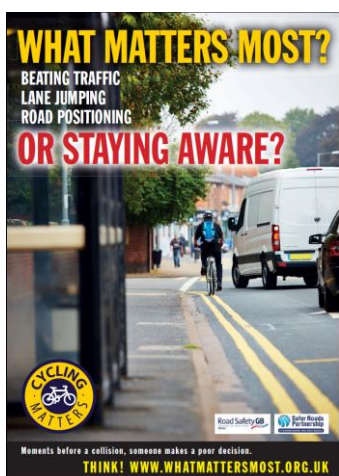


✓ Good points:

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 poster 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.

b. Drivers and Cyclists are More Alike Than You Think (Department for Transport) - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252070/think-cyclist-toolkit.pdf



✓ Good point:

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

✗ Bad point:

Unfortunately CTC, 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) as well as the advice on helmet use.

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:

<https://www.ctc.org.uk/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, CTC believes that they should be clear and avoid disseminating misleading messages.

✓ CTC 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 it can be understood quickly and easily, including by cyclists who are not native English speakers.

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.



FURTHER READING/WEBSITES

- CTC 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.ctc.org.uk/campaigning/views-and-briefings

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ DfT. *A Qualitative Study of Drink Driving*. 2010. <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/rsrr-113/findings.pdf>

² DfT. *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2012*. Sep 2013. P43.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269601/rrcgb-2012-complete.pdf

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.ctc.org.uk/news/cycling-and-safety-groups-object-to-tfl-sticker-on-vans-and-buses> (CTC News 21/2/2014).