

Vulnerable road users

This hand-out offers advice for sharing the road with vulnerable road users. The roads are there for everyone to use and as advanced drivers and riders we have a duty to make sure we share them safely.

A vulnerable road user is someone who has very little or no protection around them. There are many types including:

- Pedestrians
- Motorcyclists
- Horses
- Cyclists
- Mobility scooter users

Pedestrians

Pedestrians are made up of different types of people e.g. young, elderly, blind, deaf, people with limited mobility, all of whom share the road with us and do not have the protection of being in a vehicle with modern safety features. Pavements are usually the safest place for pedestrians to be, however, they need to be able to cross the road safely. Where there is no pavement for them to use they may be in the road. Not everyone on the pavement will be walking: people use roller blades, skateboards and scooters, you may need to adjust your driving to share the road safely with them.

Most of us will walk at some time; treat pedestrians the way you would want to be treated, keep them safe.

- Give them the time and space they need to use the road, especially those who have restricted mobility.

Children can be hard to see, moving quickly and doing the unexpected. Anticipate this and plan for it.

- Be patient when directed to stop by a school crossing patrol or when stopping at pedestrian crossings.

Think about where you park your vehicle.

- Is it obstructing a dropped kerb?
- Does it obscure or restrict the view of a vulnerable road user?

Never wave a pedestrian across the road, you could be inviting them into danger.

Cyclists

Cyclists share our roads and are therefore vulnerable to other traffic, especially at roundabouts and junctions. In heavy traffic cyclists may filter on either side, so you have to ensure you check your mirrors and blind spots before changing position or speed.

Cyclists may wobble because they are easily affected by side winds, which can also be generated when being overtaken. They may adjust their road positioning unexpectedly



to avoid drains and uneven road surfaces; anticipate this and prepare to adjust your driving.

You can help keep cyclists safe by:

- Allowing plenty of room when passing, be patient and plan to overtake only when it is safe to do so.
- Not following too closely as this may be intimidating.
- Respect cycle lanes and advance stop lines, give cyclists time to move off safely as they may not move away as fast as you.

Motorcyclists

There have been a number of campaigns highlighting the vulnerability of motorcyclists and yet there are still high numbers being injured every day on our roads.

Motorcyclists are:

- Harder to see, especially at junctions; they may be in a blind spot created by the 'A' pillar.
- Often travelling faster than you perceive or may be filtering either side of you.
- More affected by side winds when being overtaken or when in open areas.

Where is a motorcycle likely to be, in your mirrors or in your blind spot?

Take extra care when at junctions.

Motorcycles are harder to see as they have a different profile to a car or van. A motorcycle's headlamp may be confused with that of a car behind it, and high visibility clothing can sometimes blend into the background.

Motorcyclists may avoid riding over drain covers and paint on the road as these can cause stability problems especially in the wet.

A wet road surface may also cause them to alter their positioning on bends and roundabouts; be prepared to allow them extra space.

Mobility Scooters

Mobility scooters are becoming more prevalent. There are 2 main types:

- **Class 2** which are designed to be used on pavements and footpaths and have a top speed of 4 miles per hour.
- **Class 3** which may be used on the roads and have a top speed of 8 miles per hour.

These vehicles are electric, almost silent and therefore difficult to hear. Their slow speed means traffic may catch them up very quickly. Both types of mobility scooter's may use the road at junctions and at some roundabouts; this is where they are most vulnerable. Remember, the users of these types of transport may have restricted movement, vision or hearing. As an advanced driver/rider you need to allow these road-users plenty of space and time.

Horses

Horses are normally found being ridden in the rural areas, but may be encountered in towns. Although they prefer to ride on bridleways and other off-road places, sometimes the riders have to use the roads.

Horses can be very unpredictable and scare easily. When you see a horse and rider, slow right down, give them plenty of room, turn the radio down and keep the engine revs low, be as quiet as possible the highest useable gear will help. Only pass when you can give them plenty of space.

Sometimes you may find horses riding double file, this may be because of a young or novice rider, or a nervous horse. Give them plenty of space and be patient.