

Road Safety and the Legal Framework

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

Inactivity is far more dangerous to people's health than cycling or walking. We need to get the message out loud and clear that cycling and walking are great for our health, and we need to get Britain moving. One of the greatest deterrents, however, particularly for parents, is fear of the danger of our roads.

I will add to points made by other hon. Members by speaking about those drivers who escape all consequences. I suggest to the Minister that we need to get across the immediacy and certainty of consequences. The line between careless and dangerous driving is a very blurred one; today's careless driver is tomorrow's dangerous driver. We need to ensure that people do not entirely escape consequences and that they know what will follow. I agree that we need to close the exceptional hardship loophole. Merely inconveniencing and fining those who are at the beginning of their journey to becoming dangerous drivers is not enough.

I also ask the Minister to consider the role of restorative justice. To give an example, I got the phone call that no parent wants to get, telling me that my daughter was unconscious in the back of an ambulance. While wearing hi-vis in a cycle lane, she had been knocked off her bicycle by a careless or even dangerous driver who was in a hurry and was turning into a side road. If my daughter had not been wearing a cycle helmet, she would undoubtedly have been killed or very seriously injured. I was shocked that she was interviewed in the casualty department while she was still concussed.

There were no consequences whatever for the driver. My daughter is not a vindictive person and nor am I, but at the very least I would have expected someone to investigate the incident. Witnesses came forward and were happy to testify, but nothing happened. When someone has been very seriously injured in such a collision, restorative justice could play a role. I hope the Minister will consider how we can ensure that drivers meet the person whom they have injured. Until that takes place, they should face some immediate consequences—a ban, at least.

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