

PACTS Policy Briefing

Targets 2010: Review of Progress

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation's World Health Day will be marked on 7 April 2004 with the theme 'Road Safety is No Accident'. Globally, road casualties are a major public health concern, with 1.2 million people killed and over 50 million people injured in road crashes annually. If current trends continue, by 2020 road traffic crashes will rank third in global causes of ill health.

To mark World Health Day, this policy briefing reviews progress towards targets to reduce UK road casualties by 2010. These targets are vital not only for reducing the number of people killed or injured on the roads in the UK but also for further developing best practice in road safety. As the UK is a world leader in road safety, disseminating this knowledge and sharing experiences can contribute to dealing with road casualties as a global public health concern.

TARGETS 2010

In 2000, with the publication of *Tomorrow's Roads: Safer for Everyone*, the government set out its road safety targets for 2010:

- a 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- a 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured; and
- a 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate.

In 2002, the following Public Service Agreement was added as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review:

To reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in Great Britain in road accidents by 40% and the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50% by 2010 compared with the average for 1994-98, tackling the significantly higher incidence in disadvantaged communities.

Through the sustained effort and commitment of local authorities, police,

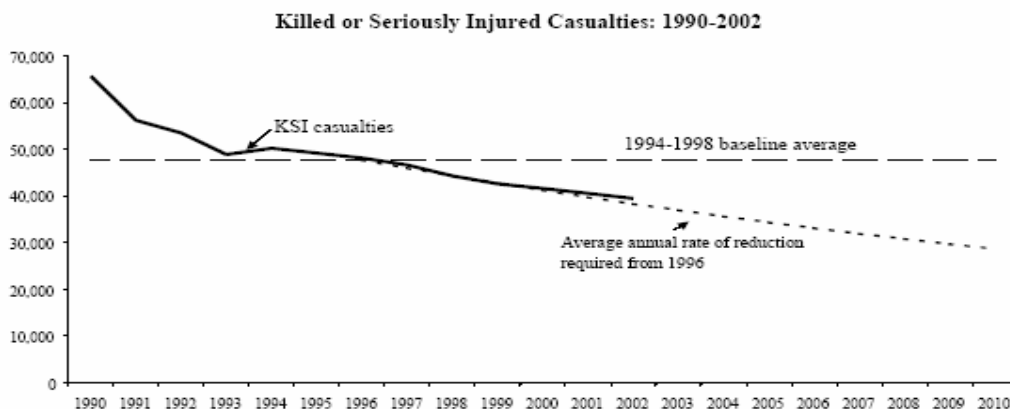


Figure 1: Source: *Road Casualties Great Britain 2002: Annual Report*

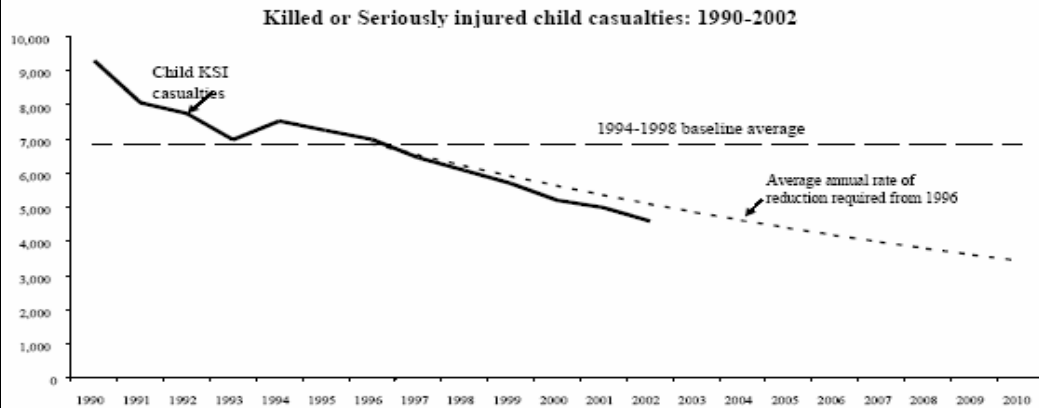


Figure 2: Source: *Road Casualties Great Britain 2002: Annual Report*

safety campaigners, Government departments, local and national politicians and – crucially – individual road users, major steps have been made towards achieving these targets. In 2002, 3431 people were killed in road accidents and 35,976 were seriously injured— 17% below the baseline average (see figure 1). While this is broadly consistent with the progress needed towards the target, further action will be necessary to ensure the target is met. In 2002, 179 children were killed in road accidents and 4,417 were seriously injured. This is 33% below baseline - two-thirds of the way to the 50% target set for 2010 (see figure 2).

This briefing assesses the progress that has been made on the goals laid out in *Tomorrow's Roads*, and looks at new opportunities and challenges for the future. Areas that remain of particular concern include drink driving, work-related road safety, speed management, and child pedestrian casualties.

SAFER FOR CHILDREN

Major progress has been made towards achieving the target for reducing child casualties. However, despite this and despite Britain achieving the overall best road safety record in Europe, our record on child pedestrian deaths remains among the worst in Europe, with an incidence several times higher than the best performing countries.

Actions taken thus far to improve child safety include education and advertising targeted at children; guidance to local authorities on establishing home zones, 20mph zones and safe crossing facilities; support for school travel plans; and support for cycle training and education. Continuing efforts on speed, infrastructure, vehicle design and enforcement will be necessary to maintain progress towards the target.

SAFER DRIVERS – TRAINING AND TESTING

A number of safety-related changes have been made to driver training and testing, including introduction of hazard perception tests, trials of learner log-books and changes to the theory test.

SAFER DRIVERS – DRINK, DRUGS AND DROWSINESS

Casualties related to drink, drugs and drowsiness are one of the main areas of

failure thus far in the road safety strategy. In 2002, 3380 people were killed or seriously injured in collisions involving illegal alcohol levels; this is virtually unchanged from the 1994-1998 average (3396). 560 people were killed in these crashes in 2002—nearly five per cent more than the baseline average. These crashes continue to account for 7% of all road casualties and 15% of deaths. Despite this, a number of actions suggested in *Tomorrow's Roads* and in the 1998 consultation paper *Combating Drink Driving: Next Steps* have not been proceeded with or await further action. These include lowering the drink-drive limit, legislating to allow targeted/evidence-led breath testing, introducing evidential roadside breath testing and increasing drink-drive penalties for the worst offenders.

Legislation to strengthen police powers for roadside drug testing was introduced in the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003. Roadside drug testing will be possible once protocols and type approval for the devices are finalised, but it may be some time until this translates into road casualty savings.

Driver fatigue remains a concern, particularly in the context of driving at work. Research has indicated 25-33% of serious and fatal traffic accidents involve someone who was at work at the time. In this context, HSE's reluctance to enforce its own guidance on work-related road safety is a wasted opportunity.

SAFER INFRASTRUCTURE

Creating better road environments remains key to reducing casualties. Infrastructure projects at local level have been instrumental to improving safety; and Local Transport Plans have proven to be successful in making funding for safety projects available. Traffic calming and 20mph zones in residential areas can be particularly effective in residential areas. The Health Development Agency estimates that 20mph zones could prevent up to 13,000 child pedestrian injuries, and Hull has seen reductions of child pedestrian injuries of 75% within 20mph zones. The Gloucester Safer City project demonstrated that an integrated approach to road safety, engineering and traffic management can result in a significant drop in casualties: deaths and serious injuries in Gloucester fell by nearly 40% compared to control towns. Lessons from Gloucester and other successful schemes should continue to be disseminated.

SAFER SPEEDS

Excess and inappropriate vehicle speeds remain a challenge to achieving the 2010 targets, although considerable progress has been made. The hypothecation scheme for speed cameras has proven to be a success, with trials indicating a 35% reduction in people killed or seriously injured at camera sites. Camera enforcement, however, is only one element of an integrated speed management strategy needed to deal effectively with speeding. Action is still awaited on increasing penalties for speeding drivers, creating a hierarchy of roads by usage and revising speed limit guidelines. In the longer term, Intelligent Speed Adaptation has potential to ensure safer speeds.

Speed management has proven to be one of the most controversial elements of the road safety strategy, and PACTS urges the Government to continue to promote the road safety value of an integrated approach to speed management strategy.

SAFER VEHICLES

Progress has been mixed on ensuring safer vehicles. While improved vehicle design—supported by EuroNCAP and other initiatives—has no doubt contributed to the drop in road casualties, the European Directive on pedestrian protection mentioned in the strategy is considerably weaker than originally envisaged. 'E-safety' initiatives, however, have developed considerably since *Tomorrow's Roads* and will present both major new opportunities to prevent road crashes and new challenges in terms of distraction and vehicle control.

SAFER MOTORCYCLING

Motorcyclists and passengers are greatly overrepresented in road casualties, and the number of motorcyclists/passengers killed or seriously injured since the 1994-1998 baseline has increased by 16%. While motorcyclists represent around 1% of all road traffic, they represent over 19% of those killed and seriously injured on the roads. However, the rate of motorcycle casualties (KSI per billion passenger kilometres) is declining. Of particular concern is how to prevent crashes among high-speed 'sports' motorcyclists who may not be persuaded by training or education messages. A comprehensive research project into the causes and circumstances of motorcycle casualties will be necessary for developing an effective strategy for preventing these crashes. In reviewing policies for motorcycle safety, consideration should be given to limiting direct access to high-powered motorcycles for novice riders until appropriate training has been undertaken.

SAFER PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

Casualties for pedestrians and cyclists have dropped more rapidly than those among other road users. The number of pedestrians killed or seriously injured in 2002 dropped to 26% below the baseline figure. This has occurred against a backdrop of a continued decline in pedestrian mileage, reflecting reduced exposure. However, the rate of these casualties per billion passenger kilometres has also slightly declined. For cyclists, the statistics are even more positive: the numbers killed and seriously injured are 34% below the baseline figure, accompanied by an increase in cycle traffic of 9% since 1994-1998. The rate per billion passenger kilometres has also decreased. Among the factors that may have helped achieve these positive figures are increasing provision for pedestrians and cyclists in road engineering, traffic calming, better speed management and more effective enforcement.

BETTER ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement is strongly linked to casualty reduction. While use of new technologies including safety cameras and Automatic Number Plate Recognition has contributed to the effectiveness of enforcement, numbers of dedicated traffic

police officers have continued to fall—a major concern. This may be linked with the failure to include roads policing as a 'key priority' in the National Policing Plan. PACTS is also concerned that bad driving offences including those involving death are often not dealt with in a manner that reflects their seriousness. The proposed European directive on enforcement could provide an opportunity to focus on enforcement as a means of reducing casualties.

DEALING WITH DISADVANTAGE

The PSA target of tackling the higher incidence of road casualties in disadvantaged communities may be one of the most important and one of the most challenging elements of the road safety strategy. For the target to be met, effective integration will be necessary between road safety, neighbourhood renewal and regeneration schemes. Progress towards this target is underway: in 2002 total casualties in the 88 most disadvantaged areas were 6.4% below the average for 1999-2001, compared with a 5.1% drop for England as a whole. DfT's 'Dealing with disadvantage grant' projects in the greater Manchester area may offer opportunities to improve these figures further by providing a model for successfully connecting regeneration efforts with initiatives to improve child pedestrian safety in disadvantaged areas.

CONCLUSION

Considerable progress has been made towards the targets for 2010. This has been achieved as the result of sustained efforts across all road safety stakeholders. However, there is no room for complacency: there continue to be nearly 40,000 people killed or injured on our roads, and many road safety measures have come under sustained attack in some sections of the press. For the targets to be met, a 27% reduction in people killed or seriously injured and a 25% reduction in children killed or seriously injured on the roads are needed. Further action is necessary not only to work towards these figure but also to sustain the reduction in casualties achieved so far. In a global context, this would provide a means for not only reducing road casualties in the UK but also for developing best practice to provide a framework for casualty reduction worldwide.

PACTS is an associate parliamentary group and registered charity advising and informing Members of Parliament on road, rail and air safety issues. It brings together technical expertise from the public, private, academic and professional sectors to promote research-based solutions to transport safety problems. Its charitable objective is to promote transport safety legislation to protect human life.

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