

## The work of RoadPeace

*RoadPeace is UK's only national charity working solely for and on behalf of all victims of road death and injury.*

*RoadPeace provides emotional and practical help, support and information to those bereaved or injured on the roads and their families. This is a specialist service, tailor made to the needs of road victims and developed over eleven years from our experience of hundreds of cases and from the evidence-based research of psychologists and other relevant professionals.*

*Road victims suffer sudden, violent trauma by bereavement or life changing injury, but they then often suffer further victimisation in having their loss or suffering dismissed by society as an 'accident'. It is this trivialisation of their tragedy, reflected in the law and in the low-level response by all the authorities, which, combined with the complexity of the legal and other procedures they have to face, makes it vital that they receive a specialist service, based on support by others who have experienced the same tragedy.*

*A description of police bereavement in an article in the Police Review is equally true of road death: 'Something that cannot be described, only understood by those who experience it'.*

*Psychologists have identified three basic needs of trauma victims: an appropriate recognition of their loss, full and accurate information about the case and their rights and peer/social support from others who have suffered a similar experience. RoadPeace addresses these needs in the following way:*

### 1. THE HELPLINE

*The Helpline is open 9am to 9pm, every day, including Christmas, staffed by trained volunteer Helpliners, who bring a variety of skills: legal, medical, counselling and many others to the task, as well as their commitment as volunteers and their own experience of bereavement or life changing injury in a family member. They have moved on from their own tragedy but can empathise with the caller. They have regularly-updated information on services and helping organisations, so that they can make referrals or provide specific information. More complex requests can be referred to more experienced Helpliners or specialists within RoadPeace. Appropriate literature is provided and follow up calls are made. Callers can ring as often as they wish and for as long a period as they wish.*

### 2. LITERATURE

*RoadPeace literature is prepared by victims from the victims' perspective, using our accumulated knowledge and experience developed over many years, in consultation with lawyers, psychologists and other professionals.*

*We provide a Guide for the bereaved and a Directory for the Injured and 27 briefing sheets on a wide variety of relevant topics.*

### 3. LOCAL GROUPS AND CONTACTS

*Callers are offered details of several local contacts with a similar experience and information on a growing number of local groups. Local Groups focus on the needs of users: some are linked closely to a Cathedral or Church but others are*

*more broadly based, working with local police, coroner and local authority. Speakers are provided and there are opportunities to meet other victims and share information, experiences and sorrow. Many feel that talking to someone else who has been through a similar tragedy, who is deeply interested in them and their issues and whom they can trust, is of immense value.*

*4. A NEWSLETTER is sent out quarterly, giving news of activities and events and giving members an outlet for their views and feelings and an opportunity to publicise their individual stories and publish poems and other tributes to their loved ones. This helps both the writers and the readers who can empathise with the feelings expressed. It is a vehicle to highlight the most frequent and important issues and provides information on a variety of relevant topics: health, criminal and civil law, inquests. There are contributions from experts, for example, an annual digest of civil cases by a recognised personal injury expert and author of a number of books on the subject and a recent article by a trust and probate expert.*

*5. ADVOCACY/FOLLOW UP ON INDIVIDUAL CASES: Letter writing, phoning police or CPS, accompanying families to court or Inquests or meetings with CPS. CPS have informed their regional offices of the Attorney General's decision that road victims should be offered the opportunity of a RoadPeace representative to accompany them to a meeting with CPS.*

*6. PROMOTION OF THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS - the European, soon to be World, Day of Remembrance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in November.*

*Services are held at places of worship of all denominations up and down the country and special prayers offered in many more. During the weeks leading up to the Day of Remembrance, road victims are also being remembered in schools and other community groups. This Day provides a dignity and recognition to death on the road, or serious injury, and honours and thanks the emergency services. RoadPeace also offers other opportunities for remembrance by planting a tree in the ten-acre RoadPeace Memorial Wood, part of the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. A further opportunity for personal remembrance is offered through the Internet Memorial Site on the RoadPeace Website.*

#### **7. WEBSITE**

*The RoadPeace website is in development and currently provides basic information on the charity and events.*

#### **8. REFERRALS TO SPECIALIST SOLICITORS**

*A list of specialist solicitors, who satisfy certain criteria, is provided to Helplineers who can make contact details available to callers. The RoadPeace Lawyers' Group provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, discussion of problems and relevant legal developments appropriate to the plight of road victims, enabling these specialist lawyers to provide a better service to road victims.*

#### **9. RoadPeace's Role in helping victims become survivors and to see lessons learnt from their tragedies**

*RoadPeace's advocacy, Road Danger Reduction and Awareness Raising - role is a further service to victims. Many people, who have suffered a tragedy as the result of a road crash, want more than anything to prevent others going through the*

same suffering. They may want to campaign for specific changes to road design or speed limits or generally to raise awareness of the scale of death and injury on the roads and the human misery it causes.

RoadPeace is able to provide support and opportunities to victims to publicise their case to the media, if this is what they want, or put them in touch with others with similar aims. There are opportunities to take part in police training, talks to disqualified drivers or to more general groups, or to organise a Remembrance service in their own area. . All of this can be therapeutic and many find a new confidence and strength born of their tragedy, enabling them to walk tall again, rather than be a beaten victim.

The following sections deal with the work of RoadPeace which is a not a direct service to victims, but which is designed to (and is likely to) improve the treatment of victims, the response by all the authorities and reduce the number of future victims.

#### **10. ADVOCACY FOR ROAD VICTIM ISSUES**

Through its eleven years of direct work for victims and experience with them, RoadPeace is the only organisation qualified and competent to take on and deliver this role, which is a service to victims but also an increasingly valued consultancy and information service to government and the various relevant authorities. The victims' perspective contributes invaluable information on how the law and procedures work in practice and the effect that this has on ordinary people.

RoadPeace acts as an advocate for road victims and their issues across all departments and authorities dealing with victim issues, as well as in individual cases, presenting the victims' perspective at meetings with government, police, CPS and many others, providing reports, submissions to consultations (a full list is attached), like the Victims Charter consultation, talks and contributions to training programmes.

RoadPeace is also able to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the experts on our Advisory Panel and our membership, as well as the Parliamentary and Lawyers' Groups, to produce responses to consultations of the highest quality like 'Towards Justice', our response to the Road Traffic Penalties Review, and publications like 'Under-reporting of road traffic casualties in the UK'.

#### **11. WORKING AT EUROPEAN AND UN LEVELS**

RoadPeace has been an active member, for the last ten years, of FEVR, The European Federation of Road Traffic Victim, which has consultative status at the United Nations and works with other local, national and international authorities and organisations. A RoadPeace Trustee is the FEVR delegate at UN Working parties in Geneva.

#### **12. TRAINING**

RoadPeace has taken part in police training in the following Police Areas: Avon and Somerset, Cheshire, Dorset, Dyfed Powys, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Merseyside, Metropolitan, North Wales, Thames Valley, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and at Bramshill.

We provide speakers for CPS training and for Probation and Prisoner Education

*courses. We have arranged meetings for the CPS Inspectorate to meet RoadPeace members in London and the North West and have been thanked for a major contribution to the Thematic Review of Road Death cases.*

*We have been thanked by the Coroners Review Team for our contribution to their work, arranging a number of London and local meetings for them to meet our members, having one Lawyers' Group meeting devoted to the Inquest team's proposals, attending meetings with them in London at our and their offices, providing written contributions and, in addition, providing three RoadPeace representatives for the Review Team's Reference Group.*

*13. The RoadPeace PARLIAMENTARY GROUP helps to take road victim issues forward through Adjournment Debates, Early Day Motions and Parliamentary Questions.*

*RoadPeace launched a 5-year education and awareness raising Campaign for Justice for Road Victims in 1998, highlighting six areas needing urgent attention: 1. victims' rights to information and consultation, 2. reform of civil proceedings, 3. need for criminal justice, 4. and 5. need for national standards in medical care and in road crash investigations, and 6. a strategic approach by all relevant government departments to tackle this major public health and human rights issue. This pioneering agenda has been taken forward and much progress has been made in most areas. The call for 'National standards in road death investigations' has resulted in the Road Death Investigation Manual, now adopted and soon to be implemented by most forces.*

#### *14. Road Danger Reduction*

*The victims' perspective is an essential contribution to the debate because road safety has frequently been focussed on health and environmental issues rather than the need to preserve life and prevent injury.*

*We contribute this perspective by working with Transport for London and other local authorities and other organisations like Transport 2000, Sustrans, Living Streets (formerly Pedestrians Association) and Slower Speeds Initiative, and through membership of PACTS and, internationally, FEVR and UN Working Parties.*

#### *15. Awareness Raising*

*Events and literature are designed to draw public attention to the scale of human suffering resulting from largely preventable crashes, the impact on families, often forever, and the cost to society. Victims have become aware of all of this from a personal tragedy and they want to make others aware without them having first to pay such a terrible price.*

*August has been designated National Road Victim Month, because more children are killed or injured during school holidays and there is an additional risk of crashes for people travelling to and from holiday destinations. RoadPeace also promotes UN Road Safety Week.*

#### *16. RESEARCH, CONFERENCES, SEMINARS*

*RoadPeace made a major contribution to the work of the 1992-4 inter agency Working Party, which resulted in 80 recommendations for all agencies dealing with road death, and an outline leaflet for the road death bereaved. RoadPeace*

*produced its own Guide using this model, already endorsed by all relevant authorities.*

*The FEVR research into the Impact on families of road victims, to which we contributed substantially, was the first ever research into this subject and was presented at our conference in 1997. The feedback from this event, which was the first to address the subject of road victims, and from our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in 2002, is used to inform our work.*

*We regularly contribute to research in the areas of trauma, psychology and transport, and are currently working on a Liverpool University project and our own research project into Red Light violation using researchers at Imperial College, London.*

*Our patron, the psychologist Noreen Tehrani, has spoken at many conferences and Seminars on the subject of road victims' experiences and the support needed. RoadPeace members have completed questionnaires used in the research, the findings of which were publicised in publications of the British Psychological Society.*

### *National Support Model*

*RoadPeace already runs a specialist national support system for road victims, which has been developed over eleven years and is highly regarded. It is also very cost effective. To make this service available to all road traffic victims, all that is needed is proper funding and a system for ensuring that all road victims are made aware of our existence and how to contact us.*