



## RoadPeace's pioneering work: 15 examples from the first 15 years

RoadPeace was established in response to the overwhelming need for a national organisation to support bereaved families and injured victims of road crashes – to draw attention to their lack of rights, the disregard of their needs and the casual attitudes taken towards them. RoadPeace supports road danger reduction and the promotion of transport policies which give greater consideration to vulnerable road users and the environment.

It was the first charity for road crash victims in the UK. It has been progressive and RoadPeace's key pioneering work to date is summarised in our three main areas of work:

- Supporting road crash victims
- Improving access to justice
- Reducing road danger

### Supporting road crash victims

#### 1. Helpline and befriender network

Launched on 8 February 1992, the RoadPeace helpline was the first national helpline for road crash victims and even preceded the introduction of the government funded Victim Supportline. The RoadPeace helpline operated 24 hours every day for the first five years before switching to a more sustainable 9 am-9 pm seven days a week.

The helpline has always been staffed by RoadPeace members with experience of road death or injury and it offers both emotional and practical support. RoadPeace's helpline coordinator provides ongoing support to the helpline volunteers and regular teleconference training and support sessions.

Handling over a thousand calls a year, it remains the most used helpline by crash victims. Callers receive follow up phone calls and are sent

information on their queries. Many request a befriender and we are able to put them in touch with another person who has been bereaved or injured in similar circumstances. Callers can phone as often and for as long as they need, and do not have to be a RoadPeace member to benefit from our helpline and casework service.

#### 2. Information guides and briefings

After collecting over 150 case studies for a Working Party RoadPeace produced the '*Guide through the aftermath of road death*' in early 1995. This was the first guide to advise families on legal procedures and sources of help after a road death. RoadPeace also organised over 300 case studies on the impact of road death and injury for a study by the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR) in collaboration with the European Commission.

Our publications highlight the time limit for the Careless Driving charge, which must be laid within six months of the crash. This key fact had been omitted for ten years from the government funded pack for bereaved families of road crashes and families were shocked to find the time had run out for the careless driving charge to be laid against a culpable driver.

Written by victims for victims, and with input from technical specialists, RoadPeace's information sheets cover such topics as *Criminal charges after a road death*, *What to do if your case goes wrong*, *Fighting for justice*, *Meeting with the CPS*, etc. Our latest *Road Death Investigation Guide* is over 25 pages, compared to two pages in the government funded guide. A minority of road deaths will involve criminal prosecution or civil compensation, but all will be investigated.

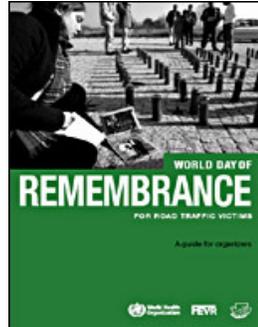


### 3. Remembrance Day for Road Traffic Victims

RoadPeace initiated the Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in the UK in 1993. It is held on the third Sunday of November, the week after Remembrance Sunday. RoadPeace worked to promote the Day which quickly spread to Europe with support from FEVR members.

It was formally adopted by the United Nations as the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in 2005. An Organiser's Guide was produced by RoadPeace, FEVR and WHO and launched at the start of the UN First Global Road Safety Week in April 2007.

[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/road\\_traffic/activities/remembrance\\_day\\_handbook/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_traffic/activities/remembrance_day_handbook/en/)



The Remembrance Day also gives thanks to the emergency services who attend road crashes and who are statistically at increased risk of road death themselves.

### 4. Remember Me roadside plaque

In August 2003, RoadPeace launched its Remember Me plaque to be placed at road crash sites. It is an A4 sized reinforced plastic card on which families can write the name and age of their loved one, crash date or any other details they want to highlight.



It was launched in central London at the site where a young woman cyclist was killed by a lorry driver who turned left without using his mirror. Both the Metropolitan Police's Head of Traffic and Jenny Jones, the Mayor's Road Safety Ambassador, spoke at the launch. Due to the popularity of the plaque, RoadPeace received the most media coverage of any charity that summer and was then invited to speak at charity training events on how to attract press coverage.

The Remember Me plaque is also used at special events. In Gloucester, at the start of the National Road Victim Month, local members organised photo displays with a Remember Me plaque for each of the lives lost in the area in the previous year. Local Authorities and Safer Road Partnerships also use the sign in their road safety campaigns.

### 5. Appropriate terminology – *Crash not accident*

Calling crashes 'road accidents' is unconstructive and insensitive. This is especially true where someone has died from law breaking on the road.

*The Oxford Dictionary defines an accident as an event that is without apparent cause or that is unexpected. Its use in the context of child road deaths could not be more inappropriate. More is known about when, where and why child pedestrian-motor vehicle collisions occur, and who will die as a result, than for almost any other disease in childhood. It would make more sense to talk of a case of accidental meningitis or accidental leukemia.*

Prof. Ian Roberts, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine & RoadPeace patron.

Since its start, RoadPeace has campaigned against the use of the term 'accident' for a road crash and first produced a briefing sheet on this subject in 1996. The campaign was relaunched in 2007 for the UN First Global Road Safety Week.

Other examples of pioneering support work by RoadPeace include the:

- RoadPeace memorial wood at the National Memorial Arboretum,
- Internet Memorial on RoadPeace website, [www.roadpeace.org/internetmemorials/index.php](http://www.roadpeace.org/internetmemorials/index.php)
- Participation in a photographic exhibit (see [www.whenlivescollide.co.uk](http://www.whenlivescollide.co.uk)),
- Testimonies of the impact of road deaths and injuries on families,
- Launch of a campaign for a National Memorial to Road Crash Victims
- Developing a network of local groups and befrienders.



## Improving access to justice

### 6. Justice Campaign & Parliamentary Group

In 1998, RoadPeace launched its Justice Campaign and established the All Party Parliamentary Group for Road Traffic Victims. These actions stemmed from research showing that UK crash victims were the most dissatisfied in Europe with the justice system.

The Justice Campaign had six demands:

- i. Victim's Right to Know and to be Heard
- ii. Criminal Proceedings to Bring Justice
- iii. National Standards in Road Crash Investigations
- iv. Fair Treatment for Victims in Civil Proceedings
- v. National Standards for Medical Care
- vi. Unified Government Strategy

The Parliamentary Group has over 150 members and meets three times a year.

### 7. Collision investigation standards

In 2001, ACPO published the first Road Death Investigation Manual. This launch of the Manual was welcomed but it is only advisory and RoadPeace has campaigned for minimum national standards. The quality of collision investigation varies widely by location. Police authorities are independent and each can determine the resources and priority assigned to collision investigation.

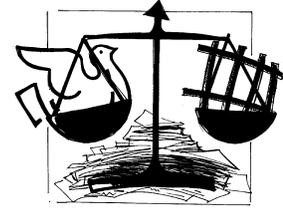
RoadPeace has also campaigned for greater investment in collision investigation training. It has called for drivers in fatal crashes to be drug tested, as is already done with the deceased. Only in the past year, and with the latest revision of the Road Death Investigation Manual, have there begun to be calls for minimum standards.

### 8. Death/injury in criminal charge

RoadPeace's key campaign has been against the use of Driving without Due Care and Attention (Careless Driving) in crashes involving death and serious injury. The lack of mention of the fact of death has caused extreme and unnecessary pain to bereaved families. RoadPeace has met with many ministers about the inappropriateness of the careless driving charge and collected over 50,000 signatures in its petition for the law to be changed. This call for change built up and pressure led to the introduction of new charges in 2006.

### 9. Strict liability

Winston Churchill defined a civilised society by how it treated its prisoners. RoadPeace believes it should also be defined by how it treats its



vulnerable road users. RoadPeace has campaigned for the introduction of a strict liability civil compensation system whereby the burden of proof is reversed in cases of pedestrian and cyclist injury by motor vehicles. This system is common in other European countries, including those with lower pedestrian death rates.

RoadPeace produced its first briefing sheet on strict liability in 2002. It campaigned with the other members of the Safer Streets Coalition for a strict liability amendment to the Road Safety Act 2006. RoadPeace organised a panel discussion on strict liability at its 7 April 2008 conference (*Improving the response to road death and injury*) and also debated it at a meeting of its All Party Parliamentary Group for Justice for Road Traffic Victims.

### 10. Equal support and rights

Victims of culpable crashes deserve the same rights and support services as other victims of crime. They do not receive similar treatment and RoadPeace has had to campaign for equal treatment and rights for road crash victims.

Half of the responses to the Victims' Charter consultation in 2001 were from RoadPeace supporters calling successfully for the inclusion of road crash victims. However, RoadPeace had to lobby again since the subsequent Home Office's draft Code of Practice for Victims of Crime which replaced the Victims' Charter failed to include road crash victims and their families unless the crash was intentional.

The final Code of Practice for Victims included those bereaved in crashes where someone is to be prosecuted for causing the crash, but injured victims remain excluded, including those with permanent disabilities caused by such criminal acts as drink driving or speeding.



## Reducing road danger

### 11. Road danger reduction approach

RoadPeace was the first organisation to adopt a prevention approach based on road danger reduction *at source*, rather than the more reactive and passive conventional road safety approach. Road danger reduction aims to decrease all of the negative consequences of motor vehicle use, not just road casualties.

RoadPeace's annual lectures have focused on promoting the road danger reduction approach, including a panel discussion of ***Murder Most Foul***, the treatise written by a former Pedestrians Association Chair in the 1940s.

### 12. Tackling red light running

RoadPeace was the first organisation to campaign against red light violations. This was a key campaign for RoadPeace as the founder's 26 year old son was killed in 1990 by a driver who ran a series of red lights. For this, he was charged with Careless Driving, fined £250, and allowed to continue driving with only 8 points added to his license. At that time, there had been no official campaign against red light running, despite legislation allowing photo enforcement just coming into force.

RoadPeace has conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness of red light cameras for the Cochrane Collaboration. This is the only systematic review of red light cameras undertaken in the UK.

### 13. Tough on speed! Tough on the causes of speed!

In 1995, RoadPeace called for the introduction of a 20 mph default speed limit for urban areas and produced a pamphlet *'Tough on Speed, Tough on the Causes of Speed'*. Shockingly, this issue suffered official neglect and *Tough on Speed* was the first publication challenging speeding in a very long time.

***End the body count!*** RoadPeace also campaigned to end the government's policy of requiring four fatal or serious injury collisions before a fixed speed camera could be installed. This policy was not justifiable on cost-effective/benefit grounds and RoadPeace saw this restriction of a life saving measure as cruel and barbaric.

With funding from a medical company which was upset at how cameras were misrepresented in the press (*the MMR of transport*), RoadPeace produced a safety camera briefing pack and organised media training for local campaigners.



helpline: 0845 4500 355 [www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)

### 14. The Missing Chapter.

In 2000, the government published its road safety strategy 'Tomorrow's Roads'. No consultation had been undertaken and RoadPeace was shocked to see the omission of emergency medical services or medical care of victims.

In response, RoadPeace published the *Missing Chapter: Better Care and Support for Victims*. It called for greater involvement of the health sector, including the recognition that road death and injury is a public health epidemic.

### 15. Black boxes: Fairer and Greener

For the First UN Global Road Safety Week, which was dedicated to young road users, RoadPeace produced a briefing and organised meetings promoting black boxes (incident data recorders in motor vehicles). These act as an incentive for safer driving and help prove innocence or guilt of drivers and vehicle manufacturers.

Other road danger reduction related pioneering work has included campaigning for casualty estimates to be adjusted for under-reporting, highlighting the impact of speed on climate change, and launching the 'Women for Worldwide Peace on the Roads' initiative since women have been at the forefront of many campaigns for justice and road danger reduction following their own tragedies.

*This briefing sheet was produced to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RoadPeace's public launch.*